SEPTEMBER 1982 NUMBER 55 $2.50

THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

COMPLETE GAME IN THIS ISSUE:

NECROMANCER

ORIGINS REPORT
GRAV ARMOR: REVIEW AND DESIGNER'S NOTES
ADVANCED CAMPAIGNING: F&SF RPG ADVICE
MAGIC IN *CAR WARS* RESULTS
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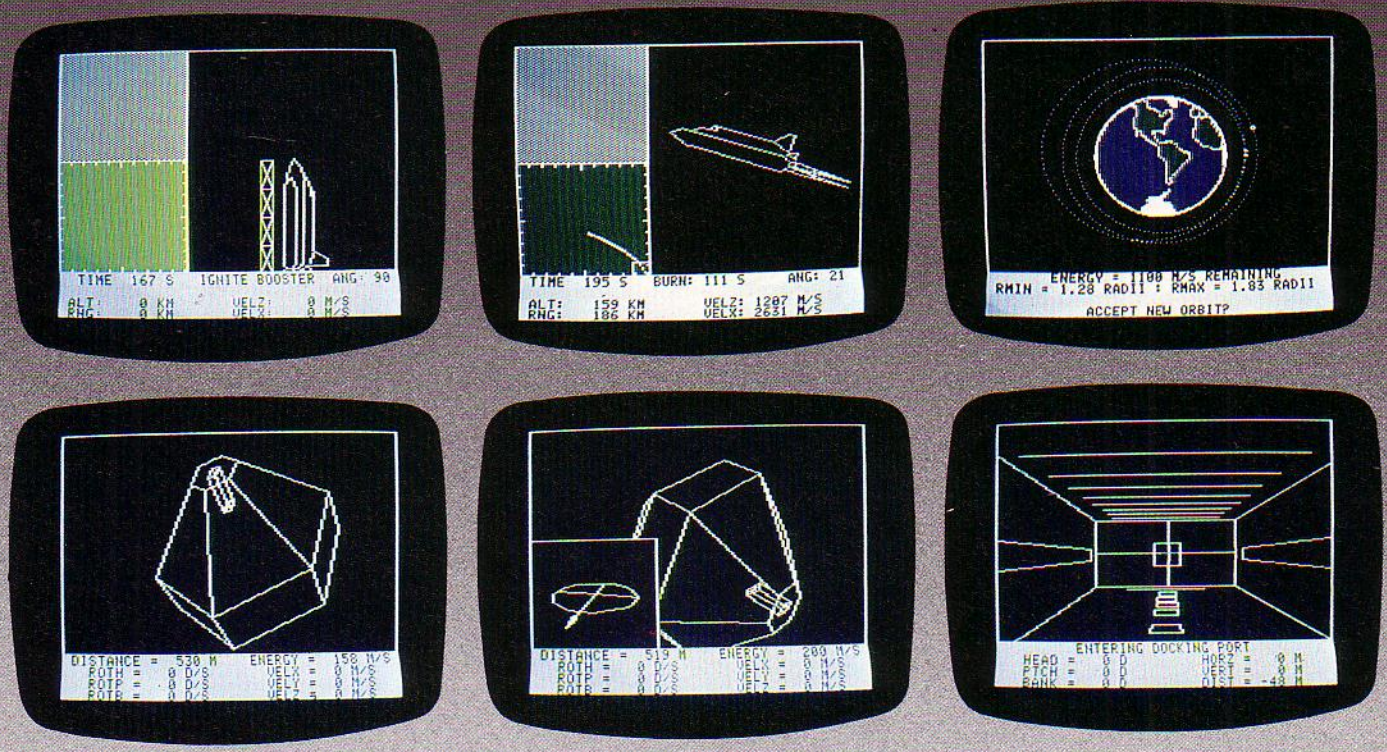
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Aaron Allston
Art Director:
Denis Loubet
Contributing Editors:
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David Bolduc
Ronald Pehr
Lewis Pulsipher
Nick Schuessler
Bruce F. Webster
Business Manager:
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ART IN THIS ISSUE
Cover: Dave Martin
Bob Barger: 8. John Borkowski: 19, 20, 21, 22, 28. Steve Crompton: 2, 16, 17. J. David George: 14. Paul Jaquays: 44. Denis Loubet: 2, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 31, 32, 33. George Webber: 38. Mel White: mailer cartoon.

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THE SPACE GAMER

NUMBER 55 — SEPTEMBER, 1982

IN THIS ISSUE

Just like last issue, I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is that we made 48 pages again, and will probably be able to do it for next issue. More good news appears all through Steve's *Where We're Going.* The bad news is that I can't seem to get my Next Issue boxes right — two articles promised for this issue ("The Splat Gun" and Steve's piece on converting D&D critters to TFT) didn't make it because of space and time considerations. I'm taking steps in this issue's Next Issue box to keep from embarrassing myself further.

This issue, we have for you *Necromancer,* a complete pull-out game starting on page 19. SF boardgamers should look over our featured review and designer's notes for *Grav Armor,* which begin on page 6, and role-playing GMs should check out our two-part "Advanced Campaigning" advice article, which starts on page 13. And there's more for gamers of every orientation — so have fun.

—Aaron Allston

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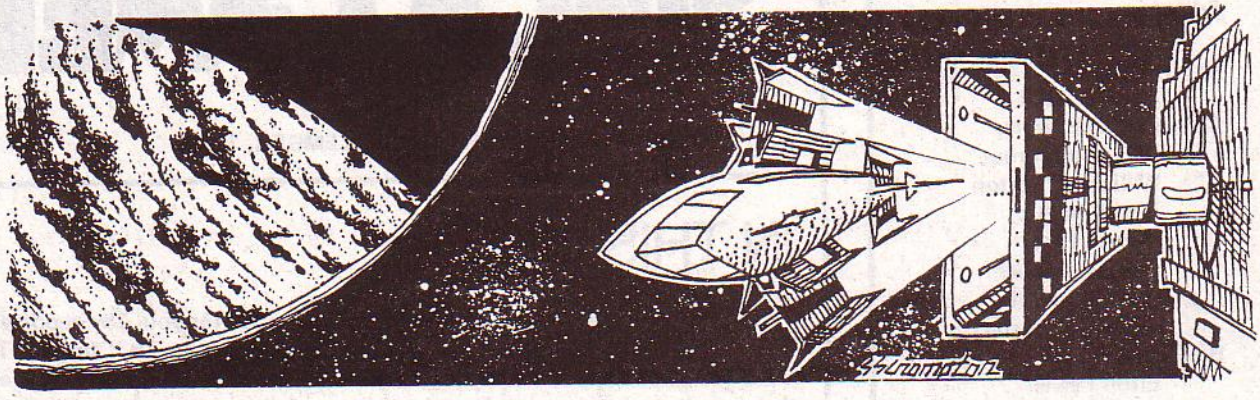
WHERE WE'RE GOING



This issue is special; it's got a game in it. But it's not as special as you think. We've decided to make games a regular part of TSG.

No, not in every issue; we're not S&T. We'll be running four games a year. The next one, ***Iron Men,*** will appear in the January, 1983 issue. After that, we'll run one game every three months . . . for as long as you like them. The issues that don't have games will include complete supplements (adventures, scenarios, or whatever you want to call them) for existing games. Already on schedule are adventures for ***Space Opera, Morrow Project, Car Wars, Champions,*** and more.

Please let us know what you think of this issue's game, ***Necromancer,*** and of the game-plus-supplement format in general. It's your magazine.

Origins Report

First, I've got to get the really great part off my chest. *We won!* Actually, we won twice. ***Car Wars*** took the Charles Roberts Award for Best Science Fiction Boardgame, and *Fire & Movement* won (for the fourth year in a row) as Best Magazine Covering Boardgaming. (There's a complete list of the winners in this month's Scanner, p. 47). Yea, verily, the whole SJ Games staff was walking on air after the award ceremony. Those plaques are going straight up on the wall, where we can look at them and grin every morning – and we all know whom we have to thank for them. So *thanks!*

It was an interesting convention in other ways, too. All hype to the contrary, Origins is the number-one gaming event of the year. A company's showing at Origins has a lot to say . . . not necessarily about its financial solidity, but about the amount and quality of the creative work it's doing. Origins releases are important; Origins is the place where a company puts its best foot forward.

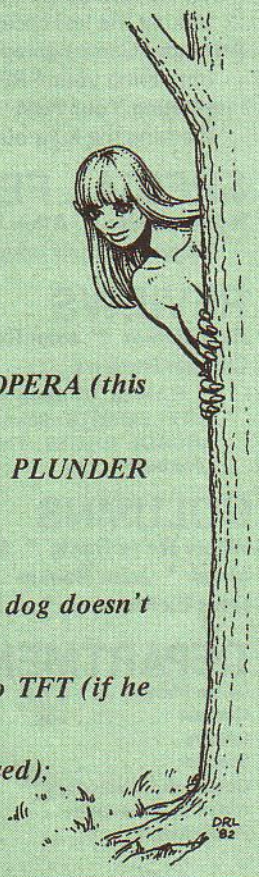
So we all spent time walking the show this year, to see who was looking good and who not-so-good. First, a few of the booths that really impressed us:

Chaosium continues to make a strong showing; this is a company on the way up. Greg Stafford's crew not only got more award nominations than anyone else, they also got more awards than anyone else (three, in widely varying categories, and congratulations!). Their 1983 line promises to be interesting.

Flying Buffalo seems to be on the upswing. Their long-awaited ***Berserker*** game made it to Origins. I haven't played it yet, but it looks good. (Also looks a little like ***Ogre,*** eh, Rick? Nudge, nudge, wink wink.) And the new ***City Book,*** second in their "Catalyst" series, seems every bit as good as ***Grimtooth's Traps.*** If FBI hangs in there business-wise, they'll have some good stuff for us.

Iron Crown Enterprises is another rising star. They've scored quite a coup by getting the fantasy role-playing rights to

NEXT ISSUE



In our October issue, we'll probably be able to give you:

"Unnight," a planetary adventure for SPACE OPERA (this time for sure!);

A featured review of Yaquinto's PIRATES & PLUNDER (if all goes well);

"The Splat Gun" (we hope);

Foreign Report: Gaming in Australia (if the dog doesn't eat the article);

Steve Jackson on changing D&D monsters to TFT (if he remembers);

"Submitting Your Game Design" (fingers crossed);

And a trip to Mars. Maybe.

And now I.C.E.'s

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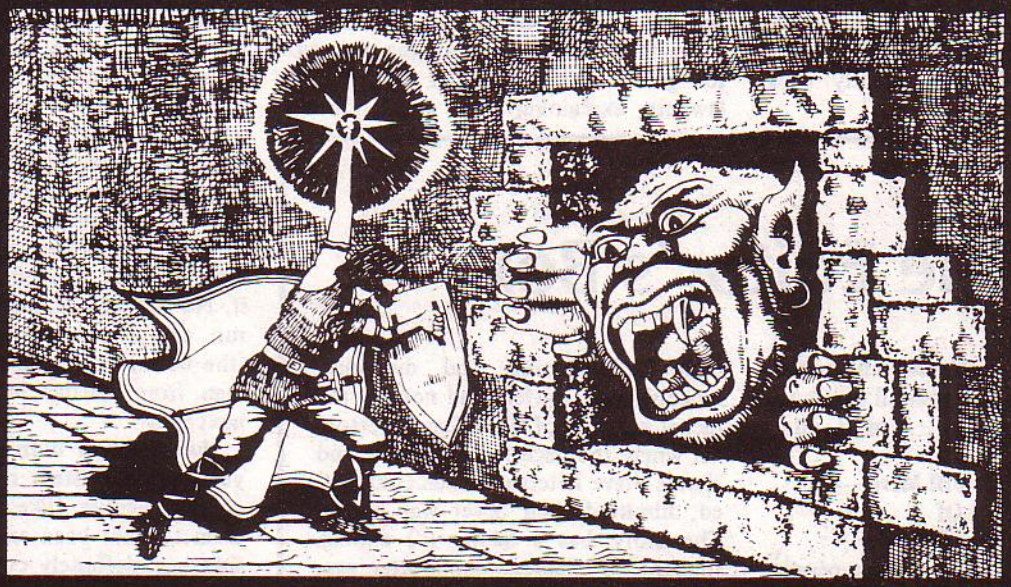

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the Tolkien "Middle Earth" mythos, and they had their first Middle Earth product – a beautiful full-color map – on display. I suspect that, while the market for new role-playing systems is very limited, the market for well-worked-out "universal" supplements is not.

FASA probably heads the "they were nobody last year and look at them now!" list. From a minor producer of ***Traveller*** supplements, they've grown into a full-fledged game company. They released ***Behind Enemy Lines,*** a World War II (!) role-playing game, at Origins. Coming soon is a licensed ***Guns of Navarone*** supplement. Good going! Another bit of news gleaned, not from the FASA people, but from author Harry Harrison: Apparently, FASA has bought the rights to do a game based on Harrison's popular *Deathworld* novels. Harrison expects the ***Deathworld*** game to compete directly with ***Traveller.*** Very interesting!

As for the big guys: *Avalon Hill* and *GDW* weren't making any big waves this year, but they had well-staffed booths, ran tournaments, and generally behaved the way you expect the "senior partners" in the game business to act: nice, solid reference points. There were rumors floating around about big new acquisitions by both companies – but nothing solid to date. Avalon Hill's new little brother, *Victory Games,* had a booth, but had only "work in progress" to show as yet.

Now a few of the disappointments . . .

TSR didn't have a booth at all; they've dropped out of the Game Manufacturer's Association, which sponsors Origins, and they're concentrating support on their own privately-owned GenCon® conventions. In fact, there wasn't even a ***Dungeons & Dragons*** tournament. We understand that the Origins planning committee got a three-page letter from TSR's lawyers, explaining some of the things that TSR might do if such tournaments were held . . . and the planning committee, which had enough problems already, simply gave in and cancelled the D&D events. Possibly because of this, the rank-and-file gamers' attitude toward TSR seemed to hit a new low at Origins. (By the time you read this, though, TSR's own convention will have come and gone, and their GenCon releases will have a lot to say about their new directions.)

Mayfair Games doesn't look too strong. There were no new Origins releases, and their vaunted Falklands Islands game isn't going over well. One distributor told us that he had bought the games at a 70% discount, and was still returning them . . . Looks like there's a need for more development before the next releases.

Gameforms may not be long for this world, which is a pity. Roger Damon's operation produced one good game and seemed to have a lot of promise. From what he said at the show, it's that old devil cash flow claiming another victim. Starting a new game company is a risky business, no question about it.

Metagaming had one almost-new release – a TFT supplement – and that was it. No new games, no tournaments being run, and no company personnel in sight (the booth was being run by a fellow on loan from Martian Metals). Better luck next year!

Judges Guild didn't have a booth this year. The persistent rumors of their upcoming demise (like within the week) seem to have been exaggerated . . . but they are definitely cutting back quite a bit.

Hobby Merchandiser is a magazine most of you have never seen. Retail store operators receive HM, and a couple of other publications like it, for free. They're supposed to be "industry" magazines, supplying unbiased news and advice to the retailers who need advice on game and hobby lines. At any rate, HM set some kind of new record with their Origins issue: TSR bought the *front cover* for an ad, and coincidentally, the lead gaming article was a GenCon writeup (third in a series of three!) by Mr. Gygax. However, there's hope; they did review *one* gaming product produced by a non-advertiser . . . if HM intends to stay in business, they need to work on their credibility. The hobby needs industry magazines, but it needs *believable* ones.

* * *

On the whole, Origins was a good convention – far from perfect, but much better than last year. Any "floating" convention, moving from city to city each year,

The Editor's Box

Not all of the convention news was product-oriented, nor was all of it normal. Some of it was . . . well, odd.

SJ Games and FBI Merge – Sort Of

The SJ Games staff and the people from Flying Buffalo, Inc., convoyed from Little Rock, AR to Baltimore. Several miles out of Knoxville, TN, a semi carrying a bulldozer abruptly pulled across two lanes of traffic, causing the Buffaloes' van to make an emergency stop and consequently causing the SJ Games car to run into the van. A third vehicle was also involved in the collision. Fortunately, no one was hurt, and all three vehicles still operated, but whiplash jokes were in vogue for the next several days.

Naked Elf Women Update

It had to happen – a stack of xeroxes of page 42 of the "Spaced Gamer" appeared mysteriously on our booth during the con. The page featured one elf woman perched atop a giant mushroom; there was also a half-page ad for Ground Zero Games, publishers of ***Cults of Antioch, Attack of the Baby Harp Seals,*** and High Velocity Dice (coming soon in Magnum, hollow-point, and dum-dum models). Our staffers had noticed the recent presence of Hero Games personnel where the page first appeared, and Hero's Steve Peterson, when confronted, admitted their cover was blown. The story has a happy (?) ending, though: SJ Games' manic alter ego, Good Taste Games, and Ground Zero Games may be collaborating on future items under the mutual auspices of Zero Taste Games.

New Groups

Our John Rankin, FBI's Mike Stackpole, and Heritage's Ed Andrews have formed the Manly Association of Wargamers (MAW), which appears to exist to introduce manliness to the industry. In response, SJ Games head typesetter Elisabeth Barrington seems to be recruiting for the Womanly Organization of Wargamers . . . The Association of Several Steves (Jackson, Peterson, and Crompton; Perrin will probably be contacted for membership) discussed creating themselves but will first probably work up another acronym, and the Secret Masters of Gaming would have met if they had figured out who they really were. All in all, it was a fairly normal event . . .

Aaron Allston

will have recurring organizational problems as it tries each year to train a brand new staff to handle the same old problems. Still, Origins is worth attending; it's the best chance you'll ever have to play against skilled opponents, meet people from every game company you ever heard of, and run yourself into total exhaustion in the space of a single weekend. Next year, Origins will be in Detroit, where the Metro Detroit Gamers are expected to do a good organizing job (they've been running conventions for years). And in 1984, Origins comes to Texas – Dallas to be precise – and it's getting a lot of support from all the Texas companies. See you there, I hope!

–Steve Jackson

GAME MASTER

GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in. Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will be first referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry – no individual replies are possible.

Car Wars

The March *Space Gamer* stated that you could pull two sidecars with a motorcycle. If you can do this, can a motorcycle so equipped do a bootlegger reverse? The rulebook states that "Only four- or six-wheeled vehicles" can do this. What would keep a motorcycle pulling two sidecars from doing this?

2. Can a motorcycle with a sidecar have solid tires? The rules say it is illegal for two-wheelers, but say nothing about sidecar-pullers.

3. Is there a limit on the number of passengers in a vehicle? If there is no limit, what is the limit on handgun fire out of one side? Could a van with 22 passengers fire 22 sub-machine guns out of one side? The rules don't make it clear whether or not the gunfire space per side rule applies to hand weapons.

Eric Reeder

1. If you tried it, you'd probably shake one or both sidecars loose.

2. A cycle with a sidecar could have solid tires, but if the sidecar is removed for any reason, the cycle will have a handling class 3 lower than normal.

3. The limit on passengers in a vehicle is defined by the space in the vehicle! If a vehicle has normal sides and roof, you can allow passengers equal to ½ the possible maximum of passengers to fire out one side – i.e., if the van had enough spaces for ten passengers, up to five could fire out one side. (We can assume there would be gunslits, etc.) If a vehicle has an open top (example: the space in the back of a pickup), then all of the passengers may fire.

SJ

Magic in Car Wars (TSG 51)

1. Can you receive sustained fire bonuses for spells?

2. If you are invisible, does a laser have any effect?

Unknown

1. You can receive sustained fire bonuses for the 50-caliber rock, fireball, and lightning spells, and for any other spell which sends a physical object or bolt of energy from the wizard to the target. No other spells get this bonus.

2. A laser does not affect an invisible target. However, an invisible vehicle can *fire a laser, if it happens to have one.*

Steve Jackson

Ogre/G.E.V.

1. Can the train enter at a speed of 1? Would it then be half-off the map?

2. May a unit use the road movement bonus to exit the map from a map edge road hex?

3. If an Ogre begins overrun combat with no guns, how many fire rounds are executed?

4. Must/may 6.134 (2) be applied when an Ogre has only missiles remaining?

5. May an Ogre with no treads ram during overrun combat?

6. May a weaponless Ogre overrun the same stack of units twice? Must he exit and reenter the hex to do so?

7. When firing on treads doubled in a town, does the attacker make a 1-2 against a number of treads equal to the attack strength, or 1-1 against half that number?

8. Can all units use the railway bridge?

Stanley Heckman

9. If an Ogre rams an armored unit and disables it, then rams it again to destroy it, does it lose tread units both times?

10. If you utilize the optional hardened CP rule, are CPs considered to be armored targets and thereby unaffected by Ogre anti-personnel weapons?

11. If a GEV's movement is stopped by a stream, may it cross the stream during the second portion of its movement phase, or must it wait until next turn?

12. If a bridge suffers spillover fire during an attack, does the spillover fire have the full effect as in the case of town hexes, or is it halved?

13. If an Ogre's missile racks are destroyed before all its missiles are expended, do the unexpended missiles count towards the opponent's victory points?

14. In the *Raid* scenario, Ogre variant (Section 9.037), the defender is told to put his Mark V Ogre in town hex 1409. There is no town hex 1409; do you mean the adjacent hex 1408?

15. In the *Train* scenario, the defender has the option of arming his train if he exchanges armor units for 4/2 guns. Does one armor unit equal two guns; i.e., one for each train hex?

16. In overruns against Ogres, why aren't "D" results treated as "X" results?

17. In the designer article for ***G.E.V.*** in *The Ogre Book*, you list a *Raid* variant using heavy tanks instead of GEVs. Should the attacker substitute tanks for GEVs on a one-to-one basis with the same defending forces, or should he use fewer tanks due to their increased strength?

18. Who is the Combine supposed to represent in your future history, and are the Paneuropean forces supposed to be NATO in the 21st century?

Edwin J. Rotondaro

1. Yes.

2. Yes.

3. Two rounds.

4. That rule would have been better phrased if it had said "weapons." If the Ogre still has missiles, overrun rounds continue.

5. No.

6. The weaponless Ogre may overrun the same stack twice. It does not have to leave and reenter the hex, but it does have to spend another movement point – the equivalent of ramming twice in Ogre.

7. It would be a 1-1 attack against a number of treads equal to half the attack strength.

8. Yes.

9. Yes.

10. Yes.

11. It may cross during its second movement phase.

12. Half effect, as per rule 6.08.

13. Only if that Ogre never escapes the map.

14. Yes. Thank you. This should be 1408.

15. Precisely; that is exactly what 9.045 says . . .

16. You can come up with whatever rationalization you like (I have a hatful) – but the reason *is that the game plays better that way.*

17. Substitute on a one-to-one basis – you'll need the extra strength to make up for the lost mobility.

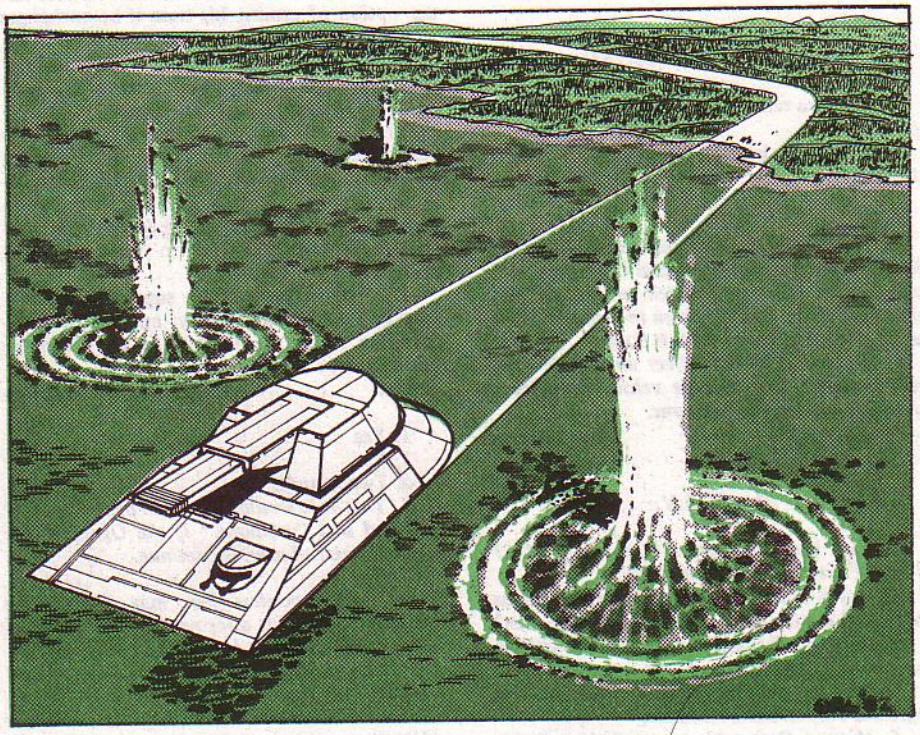
18. It's a long story, and one that I've never written for publication. Basically, the Combine is the U.S., Canada, northern Mexico, and (in the first part of the war) Great Britain. The Paneuropean alliance includes the rest of NATO and European Russia.

SJ

Featured Review:

GRAV ARMOR

by John Rankin



Tanks are mighty fine things. Offensive firepower plus cross-country mobility, wrapped up in a compact armored package, make the tank one of the most charismatic – and deadly – war machines ever developed.

Armor holds a special place in the hearts of a huge number of wargamers, but until recently, most "tankies" were of an historical bent. ***Ogre*** proved there was a market for science fiction armor games, and ever since, there's been a small but steady stream of such games and miniatures.

Back in 1970, Avalon Hill published what many considered to be the definitive World War II tank game: ***PanzerBlitz.*** While the game had its flaws, it's still in print and still one of the best-selling games of all time. Aside from ***Ogre*** (with which a comparison is hardly fair, due to the latter game's simpler nature) no SF tank game has really had an impact on the market the way ***PanzerBlitz*** did. If ***Grav Armor*** is to be a big success, comparisons to ***Panzer Blitz*** are not only fair, but inevitable.

Components

Before PB, armor game components had symbols – something that looked vaguely like tank treads, and factors for firepower and movement. PB added range factor and split the combat factor into offense and defense. But the big difference was that you now got actual tank silhouettes, which gave a very "miniatures" feel to the game. GA adds an electronics factor and one of the most imaginative groups of armor sideviews ever to come along.

The mapboards leave a bit to be desired. While the basic concept is excellent (geomorphic maps, another PB innovation, can be fitted together to form a great number of map combinations), the artwork is a bit on the sloppy side and the cardboard tends to curl up around the edges. The boards have to be taped down for play.

The rulebook and quick-reference sheet are extremely well-done, readable, and free of errors. I would have preferred the scenarios to have been on separate sheets, as they must be referred to constantly during the game; this problem as well as that of the mapboards must be considered in light of what you do get for $5.00. Overall, though, the components (as in all Dwarfstar games) represent a tremendous bargain for the money. However, I'd gladly pay ten bucks for this game with mounted maps and separate scenario cards.

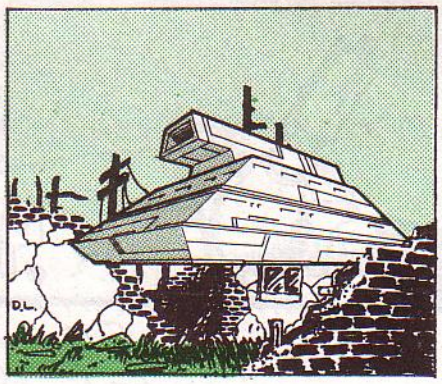
The System

This is not a beer-'n-pretzels game. Terrain, for instance, varies in type and effect with each scenario. Combining this with the vast number of available vehicular types and weapons systems means you're not going to find pat solutions to all the various tactical problems soon.

Considering this, the designer has done a commendable job in keeping the system simple and fast-moving. Basically, side one moves while side two shoots, and then the process is reversed. To shoot, your target must be in range and you must be able to spot it. In order to see a target, your electronic warfare (EW) value must equal or exceed the combined defense value (given in each scenario) of intervening terrain. For combat, you add

your attack value and EW, plus weapons modifiers and defense value if at one-hex range. This is then compared to the target unit's defense factor, EW, and the terrain combat value. The resulting positive or negative number enters the CRT and a die roll then determines the result.

It sounds simple, and in concept it is. But I must reiterate – this is not as easy as it appears. Imagine a chess game where all your pieces move at once, with all the resulting positional ramifications, and you have a good idea how much forethought is required to successfully move under fire. Not thinking out your moves will quickly turn you into a glowing crater.



Grav Armor as History

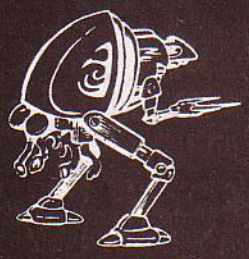
Does the technology make sense? If it doesn't, we've got "pigs in tanks." Fortunately, for the most part the designer is on solid ground. But there *are* problems.

Lasers and particle beams, for instance, can fire at units on the other side of intervening mountains (assuming they can spot and are in range). Now, either science a thousand years hence has found a way to bend these energy beams (which violates known laws of physics) or the "quick pop-up" for a fast shot would carry the tank so high as to make it a sitting duck for any unit within range. This is not a serious problem insofar as playability is concerned, but one wishes the designer would have done his homework concerning the true line-of-sight problems inherent in battlefield terrain.

A most serious problem arises in force balance. Any armor game worth its salt (regardless of period) will teach the player the absolute necessity of the three basic ground combat elements – tanks, infantry, and artillery – working in close cooperation. This "combined arms" concept requires that tanks have excellent mobility and offensive firepower, that infantry be able to hold ground, and that artillery be able to support the other two with long-range fire. In this game, two out of three ain't bad; but artillery really gets the shaft. These thin-skinned, long-range artillery missile units lack the range and/or EW to properly accomplish their mission; they must close to the point where they become highly vulnerable. A rule allowing other units to spot for artillery would solve the problem nicely. Those who like to tinker will have no problem installing an option for specified units to call in indirect fire support.

Despite these glitches, the game works, and it works well. There's more than enough detail to satisfy the simulation freak, and yet the mechanics are so streamlined that with practice the battle flows very smoothly. The armored units have personality and their diversity, combined with terrain and other variables, makes for a totally new game with every play. It's a big game in a small package and this translates to excellent value for the money. I think ***Grav Armor*** is a good game . . . I won't know if it's a great game until I've played it another 20 times or so. But I will, and that in itself ought to tell you something.

***Grav Armor** (Heritage); $4.95. Designed by Arnold Hendrick. Six 4" x 7" full-color geomorphic maps, 24-page rulebook, one information sheet, 154 full-color counters, two dice. Two players; playing time two to six hours. Published 1982.*



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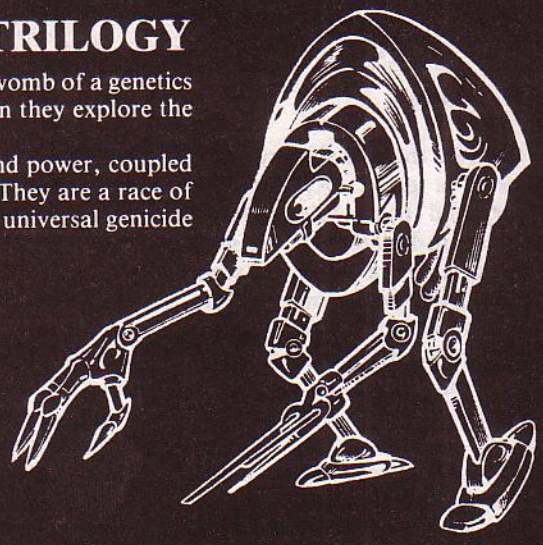

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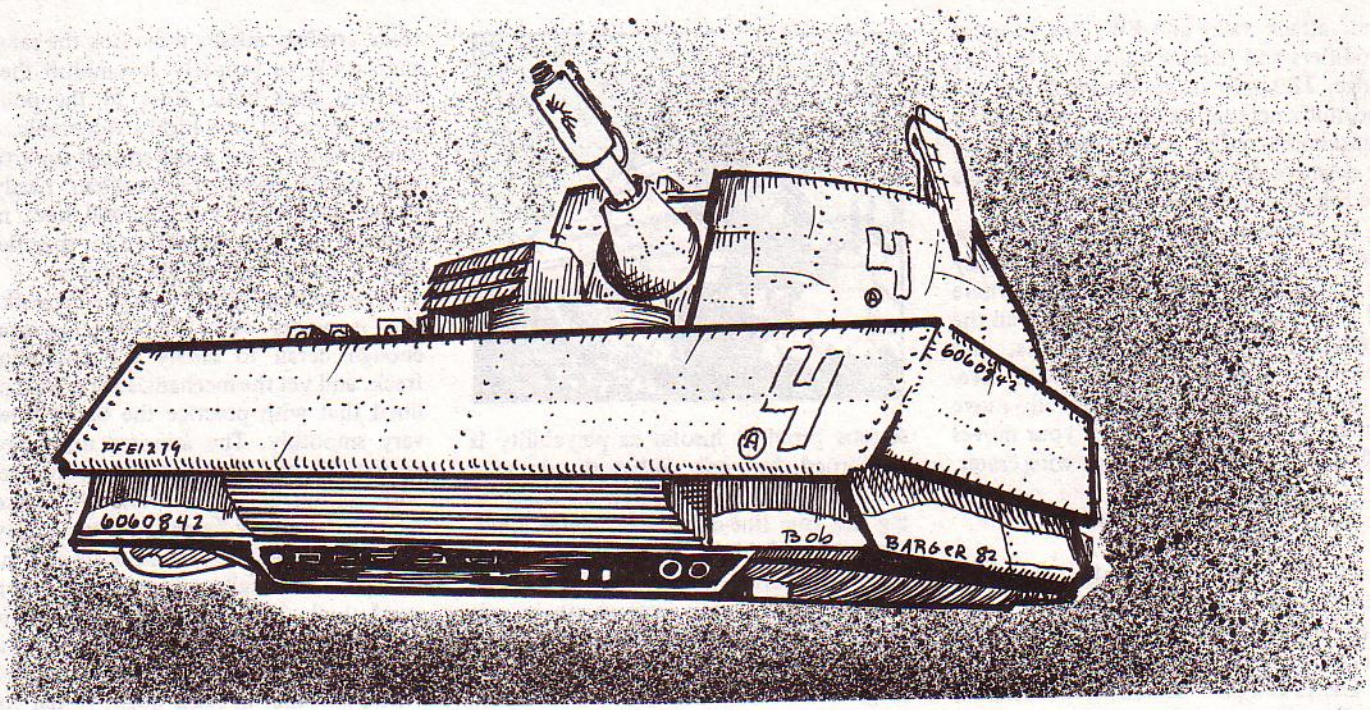


GRAV ARMOR Designer's Notes

by Arnold Hendrick

Theory . . .

There are two theories for predicting the success of a game: (A) The "I'm nifty" theory, and (B) the "You're nifty" theory. Theory A declares that the game designer is the ultimate gamer, so whatever he thinks is fantastic gamers will naturally consider fantastic, too. Theory B is more conservative, and suggests that designers observe the buying habits of gamers, and pattern future creations accordingly.

Theory A has long been popular among game designers, although it has been given various disguises over the years. Unfortunately, the market is littered with the corpses of both these designs and their publishers, whose disasters far outnumber their successful survivors. Heritage, already a tad tipsy from past mistakes, decided to try Theory B with its new SF&F Dwarfstar games.

This brings us to the topic of the day, ***Grav Armor.*** The games we observed were ***Ogre, Squad Leader/Cross of Iron, Panzer Blitz,*** and ***Panzer Leader,*** and about 20 dozen WWII games featuring German Panzers in the starring role.

. . . and Practice

There was an immediate temptation to try another ***Ogre*** "knock off" (publishing jargon for a work closely based on another, but modified enough to eliminate any thought of legal action – politely termed "following the same game system" in the gaming industry). However, since this had already been tried and had failed, something a bit more original was needed.

Fortunately, I have strong positive feelings about high-technology science fiction. ***Grav Armor*** was a beautiful opportunity to explore truly advanced ground warfare. It gave me an excuse to extrapolate interesting, novel, and generally-unknown aspects of modern weaponry. In fact, unlike many SF games, the technological "reality" came first, and then a suitable game was designed around it.

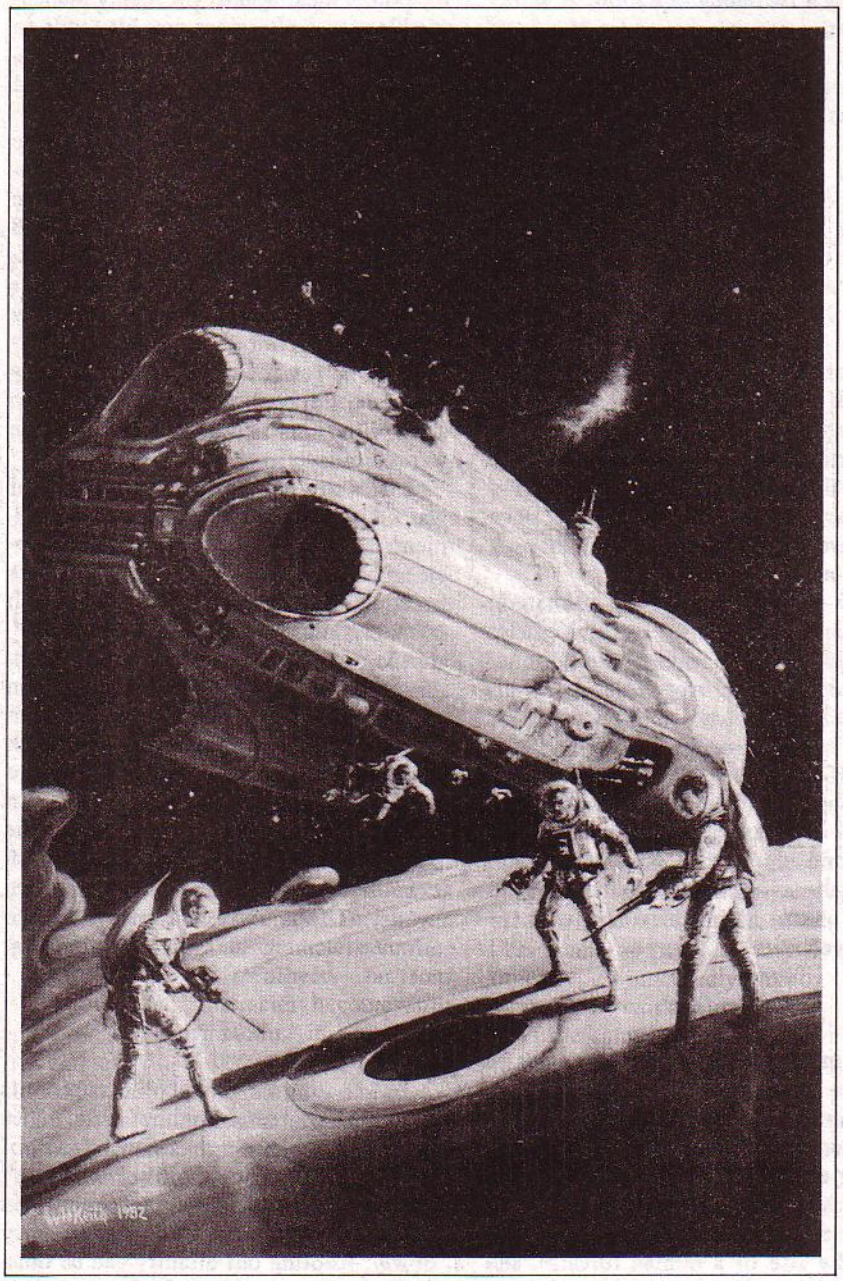
Setting things in the far future (***Ogre*** and its ilk are set just a couple of centuries into the future, if that far) also allowed me to explore another interest: ground warfare on truly alien planets. If such actions are routine (with forces designed to operate in widely diverse environments), interstellar travel must be routine also. Suddenly, ***Grav Armor*** is a game where armies are transported by spaceships, then campaign across a dozen worlds, each world presenting its own problems. Armored vehicles can fly faster than jet fighters – how else can they traverse planetary distances and campaign effectively? And, although power-armored infantry might become obsolete, Robert Heinlein has created such a potent lobby for them that any decent game designer must include them.

The situation becomes extremely complex when you consider all the possible weapons systems, electronic detection and concealment equipment, active defenses such as counter-missiles and close-defense guns, not to mention vehicles using high-speed nape-of-the-earth flying and pop-up fire like modern helicopters do.

The only feasible solution to all these problems was a larger game scale, where units were tactical elements such as platoons or companies. Looking over past successes, the answer was obvious. Very soon, ***Grav Armor*** acquired the nickname of "***PanzerBlitz*** goes to the future."

Technology and Tank Design

In the 1920s and 1930s, the H.G. Wells vision of the land battleship actually appeared in the form of Russian multi-turreted heavy tanks and German designs for similar light tanks with twin turrets (such as some early Vickers models).



BOARDING PARTY

For years before the departure of the Colonizer Ship Ulysses, mankind had been locked in fierce and deadly combat with the "DESTRUCTORS" — robot ships programmed to eliminate all forms of life. In an effort to overcome the effects of these attacks, the inhabitants of Earth had redoubled their colonization attempts by firing huge Colony Ships — each of which was a deadly and utilitarian cross between a dreadnought and a cargo ship — on a daily basis. And now, after five years of travel, the Ulysses still continued its search for a habitable planet in the Orion system.

No one could have known that anything was amiss before the DESTRUCTOR cruiser materialized in the dead void and opened fire on the Ulysses. And then, much more quickly than any human could react, the interlinked computer networks of the Ulysses locked onto their target and returned the fire, the colonizer's phasers stinging sharply through the blackness. Within a matter of seconds, both ships were disabled and drifted aimlessly through space, two huge masses of metallic impotence. The one hope that remained was that the humans could board the cruiser and destroy it from within . . .

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BOARDING PARTY depicts the actions of the crew of the C.S. Ulysses as they try to save their colonists from the DESTRUCTOR cruiser. Basically a solitaire game in which the DESTRUCTOR robots move randomly and the player controls the Ulysses' crew after boarding the cruiser, **BOARDING PARTY** makes an exciting and challenging two-player game as well! The game contains a full-color map of the interior of the DESTRUCTOR cruiser, 54 die-cut playing pieces and comprehensive rules of play.

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However, tank designers soon figured out that one big tank cost as much to build and maintain as many smaller tanks. Furthermore, one hit would destroy a big tank just as quickly as a small one. Worse, there was always a big enough gun, somewhere, to knock out a tank.

Since WWII, the guns have grown proportionately even more powerful than armor, so much so that armor on aircraft, ships, and many AFVs is the minimum needed to discourage fragmentation and concussion effects or light-caliber rounds. Instead, everyone concentrates on superior agility to avoid incoming rounds, active defenses to shoot them down, or electronics to scramble enemy targeting and homing systems. Electronics has become important, because it is far superior to eyesight; coupled with computer control, it is considerably more accurate. If you have to wait to see your target, your goose is often not just cooked, but well done indeed. Her Majesty's Navy recently relearned this lesson in the South Atlantic. The Argentine Army, lacking the wonderful image intensifiers, ground radars, and infra-red systems of the Brits, learned much the same every night on the Falkland Islands.

In the 31st Century in ***Grav Armor,*** flying tanks have a powerful main weapon system, which is moved into battle by gravitic drives, protected by a bit of physical armor and plenty of active defenses (which can double as offensive armament at short range), and supported by a host of electronic systems: radar, infra-red comparators, image and motion intensifiers, magnetic anomaly detectors, and more. The overall value of attacking weapons, defensive systems, and electronics is represented in numbers. Electronics add to both attack and defense, so vehicles with better gear get a double advantage.

Electronics may also limit the range of detection and weapons use. Range is limited anyway – not so much by the physical limit of the weaponry, but rather because vehicles "see" through scouting drones which must communicate straight-line using lasers (or masers, take your pick) and yet keep themselves under cover. When trying to see out to a couple hundred kilometers, this means a lot of drones, so the range reflects the drones and data-processing system attached to them more than anything else.

One of the game's most interesting aspects is the gravitics propulsion. ***Grav Armor*** postulates two-dimensional gravitic effect plates, which can produce a directed gravitational field, much like ripples travelling across water (except a ripple is one-dimensional, by comparison). Gravity is a two-body equation: It works as a relationship of masses (in this case, the mass of the vehicle versus the mass of the planet). By affecting the gravitational relationship between vehicle and planet, you not only let the vehicle float, you can also push it in any direction. The same fields, within the vehicle, compensate for inertia whenever the vehicle makes a tight turn. With such a system, there is no reason why the vehicle can't make a 90° turn on a dime while doing well over Mach One. However, if the vehicle is close to the gound at the time, dirt and rock may go flying in the opposite direction, since the planet doesn't have any inertial compensators, and the quick turn of the vehicle has suddenly altered some very powerful forces. But since when have tankers worried about chewing up the countryside?

These devices allow for the ultimate in NOE (nape of the earth) travel. Vehicles zoom along a few feet off the ground, taking advantage of every fold in the terrain, while the recon drones act as their "eyes" in all directions. If the vehicle lacks self-guiding missile weapons, it simply "pops up" the minimum distance to fire over intervening terrain, pauses for a millisecond or so, then pops down again – it's all computer-controlled, and so fast it's almost impossible to see with the naked eye.

Weaponry

The game features four basic types of offensive weaponry. First is the "intelligent" missile. Individually, it is computer-controlled, with target identification and tracking abilities in a variety of mediums, as well as NOE gravitics to keep it hidden as long as possible. The basic missile is about the size of a human forearm, and has multiple self-guiding warheads that release a few seconds before impact to achieve maximum effect. Missiles are fired in volleys that are akin to barrages. The result is that any concentration of troops or vehicles is doomed – the best defense is to stay dispersed, stay hidden, or move fast. In game terms, players stupid enough to stack units in the face of missile fire deserve the thrashing they'll receive.

The "mag gun" is a magnetic accelerator that fires sliver-like bolts at velocities near the speed of light. The material fired consists of enormously dense alloys made of unstable metals near the upper end of the elemental scale. When a bolt hits something solid, a lot of energy is released, and the bolt itself often fissions in a splendid, if somewhat restrained, fashion. Due to its velocity and accuracy, this weapon is ideal against the highly maneuverable grav tanks, since any hit tends to be a sure kill, and defensive counter-measures are few (playing a laser over a solid metal bolt has little effect on it!).

Particle accelerators depend on atomic decay and radiation effects for their destructive power. Since this effect can be induced on the ground near a target, and can harm it nearly as much as a direct hit, the weapon is ideal against slower targets restricted to the surface – like infantry or the cheap "hover" type weapons carriers. A direct hit can scramble components in a grav tank, but it's harder to achieve the hit when the target is immune to proximity effects.

Lasers are the close-range weapon of war. This is because the power requirements are huge compared to the other devices, and the light beam itself must be broad enough to do more than punch holes in armor. Lasers are useful anti-missile weapons, and short-range secondary weapons, but in the primary-weapon role their power falls off rapidly with range. Primary-weapon lasers are quick pulse models, arranged gatling-fashion to produce a nearly continuous beam. In battle, the laser vehicles accompany the infantry for close assaults on tough positions. When they go into action, they can be devastating, since the enemy has no advance warning of a shot (it arrives at the speed of light).

Role of Troops

Power-armored infantry occupies its traditional "ground-holding" role. Once deployed, infantry moves slowly (and not at all if it lacks power-assist suits), doesn't kill much beyond close ranges, but has the sterling advantage of dying very, very slowly. Rooting out infantry can be time-consuming, and can be fatal to armored units that approach too closely. One of the best ways to eliminate enemy infantry is to use your own.

Infantry is normally teamed with carriers, which in turn are armed with laser weaponry for close-range assault support. Like modern infantry carriers today, they can't survive against tanks, but carry enough firepower to earn respect. Furthermore, while the infantry remains in the carriers, it has mobility equal to tanks, and can be delivered to the enemy's doorstep for devastating assaults at a moment's notice. To this end the Aza-3 "full grav" carriers are the nicest.

It is difficult to justify a separate artillery arm in ***Grav Armor.*** The problem lies in finding the enemy, and then delivering your firepower quickly, before he dodges away. If you are not firing on a local, tac-

tical level using your own drones, or at most working through platoon or company control nets, the time delay is enough to make anything but gigantic barrages useless. The only reasonable place to site platforms for such gigantic barrages is in space. Artillery becomes "ortillery" (a term coined by GDW and wonderfully expressive) – it is the primary advantage conferred by spacelane control. However, ortillery must constantly alter orbits to avoid being shot down, which imposes various additional requirements on the platforms themselves. Still, ortillery is slow. Its only virtue is the ability to chew up anyone unwise enough to remain in sight too long!

Range

Unless reminded, many players don't realize that the mapboard to ***Grav Armor*** covers an area similar in size to western Europe. One division of grav armor deploys over an area that required armies in the 20th Century. This kind of dispersion is possible because location and communication works through drones and computer links – direct contact (either micromagnetic or visual) from one vehicle to another is unnecessary. In short, although distances for weaponry are vast, speeds are high, and troops are generally spread out. Judging from the development of the smoothbore musket of the early 19th Century to the automatic weapons of the middle 20th, a strong argument can be made that weapons range and effectiveness come first, followed by tactical dispersion and attempts to find new and greater mobility.

The large distances involved in ***Grav Armor*** help explain two things that trouble theorists about future planetary warfare. First, it shows how one can commit a corps or army to a planet and expect to cover a substantial part of its surface (in terms of direct projection of force). Second, it explains why vehicles and troops aren't stuck on a battlefield that has long since turned to slag which will glow every night for the next millenium or two! In fact, given the secondary shielding of the vehicles, and their relative invulnerability to shock, conventional nuclear weapons simply make the real estate less valuable, without really hurting anyone. With grav vehicles perhaps a couple of kilometers apart, even a multiple megaton warhead couldn't be assured of taking out even one company of ten vehicles! About the only feasible use of large nuclear weapons is as a terror weapon against civilians, or to make fixed industry, raw materials sites, etc. untenable. As a result, such places should be defended with a variety of potent active defenses, to shoot down anything less than a very heavy missile barrage.

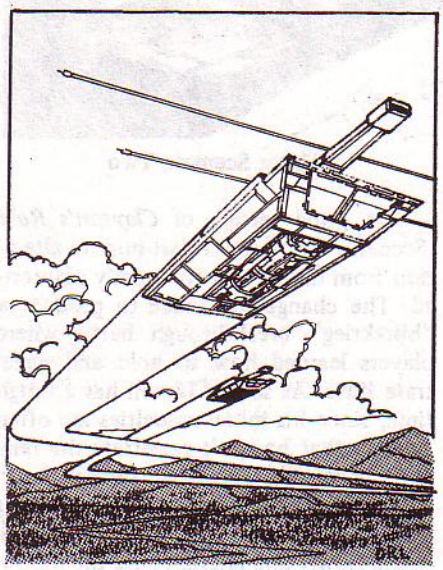
Game Design Features and Concepts

No matter how much fun one has with technical justifications, game design inevitably gets around to the game system: what is the procedure of play, how do the central aspects of that procedure actually function, and how to communicate these clearly to the players.

The game uses a most peculiar "you fire while I move" system. Although I experimented a bit with the system in the mid-70s for miniatures, and let it surface in ***Knights & Magick***, to my knowledge this is its debut in boardgames; however, I'm sure somebody has tried something similar before. Aside from eliminating the tiresome problem of units zipping from one covered-terrain hex to another, the main virtue of the system is that it keeps both players involved in every aspect of the turn – you can't afford to sleep while the other fellow moves in ***Grav Armor.***

Another novelty intended from the start was a six-piece map that was not only geomorphic (sections can be arranged and rearranged in hundreds of ways), but which also used different terrain key for different types of planets. For those who are interested, Scenario One represents planets such as Earth; Scenario Two, molten surfaces like the bright side of Mercury; Scenario Three, frozen ice worlds such as the major moons of the gas giants; Scenario Four, high-pressure hothouses such as Venus; and Scenario Five, a dead world with little or no atmosphere such as Mars.

The combat system is differential. That is, each unit must fire separately, and the total firepower is reduced by the total defense, so that a "12" shooting at a "7" results in a "+5" (not 1:1), and the reverse results in a "-5". Although hardly novel, this system helps prevent small fry from ganging up to slaughter big fry – i.e., it gives the heavier, better-protected units better chances.



In the early stages of the design, I assumed that a "0" shot would have a 50% accuracy. Unfortunately, given the rough equality of offense and defense on most vehicles, it didn't take long to figure out that a 50% kill rate would leave only 12.5% of the units alive after the third turn, presuming everyone was exchanging fire on a roughly equal basis. Worse, the first shot became really important if you could get anywhere near 50% effect. Gradually, with playtesting and some more mathematical theorizing, the current percentage spread was created. The concept was to produce a game that was relatively deadly, but only when players worked to get advantages.

A good player must exploit terrain and his maneuverability to achieve local superiority. Having the first shot still counts, which makes defensive lines anchored in good terrain formidable problems unless you can achieve a lot of gunpower, or get high-powered units past that first, deadly volley.

Meanwhile, even terrible shots still have some chance of success. The fact that an even "0" shot is only 38.89% accurate means that even "good" odds such as +1, +2, or +3 are still risky events, and very often you'll find an upsetting proportion of the opposition alive after you gave them what seemed like a good pasting.

Tactics

This brings us into the realm of tactics. The thing to remember is that the enemy has the opportunity to fire at any time during your move – before, during, and after. You must start by assuming he'll select the best possible shot, and then devise tactics to avoid these, or convince him to waste his fire on something less attractive.

When firing, it is wisest to wait until after the enemy moves, especially if he is trying to inflict damage on you, and *most* especially if he is attacking. Firing before or during the move becomes an exception to be used when circumstances require.

The first such circumstance is if the enemy is adjacent, and likely to move away – adjacent shots are so good you should not pass them up without a very good reason. Such shots also are virtually the only way infantry can inflict damage. These point-blank shots can be expected to occur when you occupy positions so

strong, or have such a powerful unit in place, that the enemy must move adjacent in order to have any chance to destroy you!

Calling shots on moving targets is much more difficult. The most typical case is a unit moving out of cover, into more open terrain, and headed toward cover again. Beware, however, of units trying to draw your fire with such moves – another enemy will then zoom up adjacent, and since you've already fired, you won't be able to get a wonderfully destructive shot off. The other situation where "pass through" fire is necessary is rather obvious – when the enemy is trying to run past you through open parts in your line. The first moves in Scenario Two almost invariably include this kind of situation.

Grand Tactics

Once they begin to make their shots count, players tend to go through a period of slugfest games, where the first shot always seems to win the battle. There is some truth in this, so the art of being a good commander revolves around making sure that the situation is always unequal – so that no matter who shoots first, you will shoot most, or with the greatest effect.

The main method for achieving this elusive aim is to concentrate your forces. Maneuver your pieces so they can all bear on part of the enemy line, while using position and terrain to leave many of the enemy units out of range or unable to fire (due to lack of detection). If you can maneuver so that in every firefight a variety of enemies are always unable to shoot, while your units can always shoot, you will probably win.

Reserves are useful devices for achieving an overwhelming firepower on a certain part of the enemy line. Ideally, your main assault goes in and attracts enemy fire, then the reserves zoom up and arrive via free flight (sometimes making the last part of their move NOE again). A good defense will have reserves to "shore up" holes thus created, and have secondary defense lines (in terms of good terrain), so an enemy breakthrough turns into a "bulge" with a new set of positions to be rushed!

Probabilities

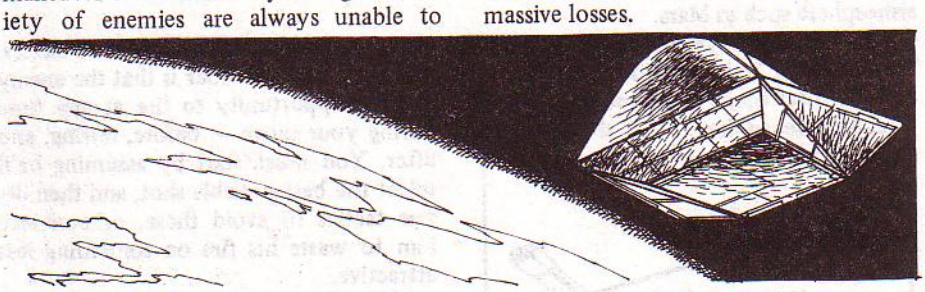
For mathematically-inclined players, the listings below indicate the combat "odds" and the probability of scoring a hit:

Odds	*%*	*Odds*	*%*	*Odds*	*%*
-10	2.78	-3	22.22	+4	61.11
-9	5.56	-2	27.78	+5	66.67
-8	8.33	-1	33.33	+6	72.22
-7	11.11	0	38.89	+7	77.78
-6	13.89	+1	44.44	+8	83.33
-5	16.67	+2	50.00	+9	88.89
-4	19.44	+3	55.56	+10	97.22

Notice that the only dramatic jump is from +9 to +10 – going that extra step is well worth it, if you have the choice.

The chances of inflicting a kill immediately when you hit infantry is 72.22% for militia, 58.33% for jump infantry, and only 41.67% for armored infantry. However, after two hits, the overall chance of scoring a kill (including two disruptions to make a kill) is 100% for militia and 94.52% for jump or armored infantry. It is well worth combining fire to try for two hits in the same turn on one unit, since it will take three or four turns of single hits before a similar probability of destruction occurs.

Finally, it is always wise to remember that gatling laser units are potential death-dealers, because not only do they get a +2 for one-hex range firing, but they also add any active defenses; the combination of the two changes a unit that routinely does little damage into something that does tremendous damage. Infantry carrier vehicles used in this role can inflict massive losses.



About Scenario Two

The game version of *Clayton's Raid* (Scenario Two) was a last-minute alteration from the version commonly playtested. The change was made to produce a "blitzkrieg" breakthrough battle where players learned how to hold and penetrate lines. As such, Clayton has a tough time, since his initial casualties are often so high that he can't penetrate the reinforcements arriving from further back.

For those who prefer an open, running battle across the map, with action developing slowly and laterally, use the following changes in initial deployment:

The Imperial 1/378 and 2/378 Lift Battalions deploy three or more hexes away from the west edge of maps 3 and/or 6. Meanwhile, the 3rd Grav Infantry Battalion of the league is changed to two armored infantry units and four Aza-3 grav carriers (instead of vice versa).

In this adjusted scenario, I believe Clayton to have a slight edge, but it can be so easily blown by good Imperial moves, or a few errors (which aren't apparent until three turns later) that it should still prove exceptionally interesting.

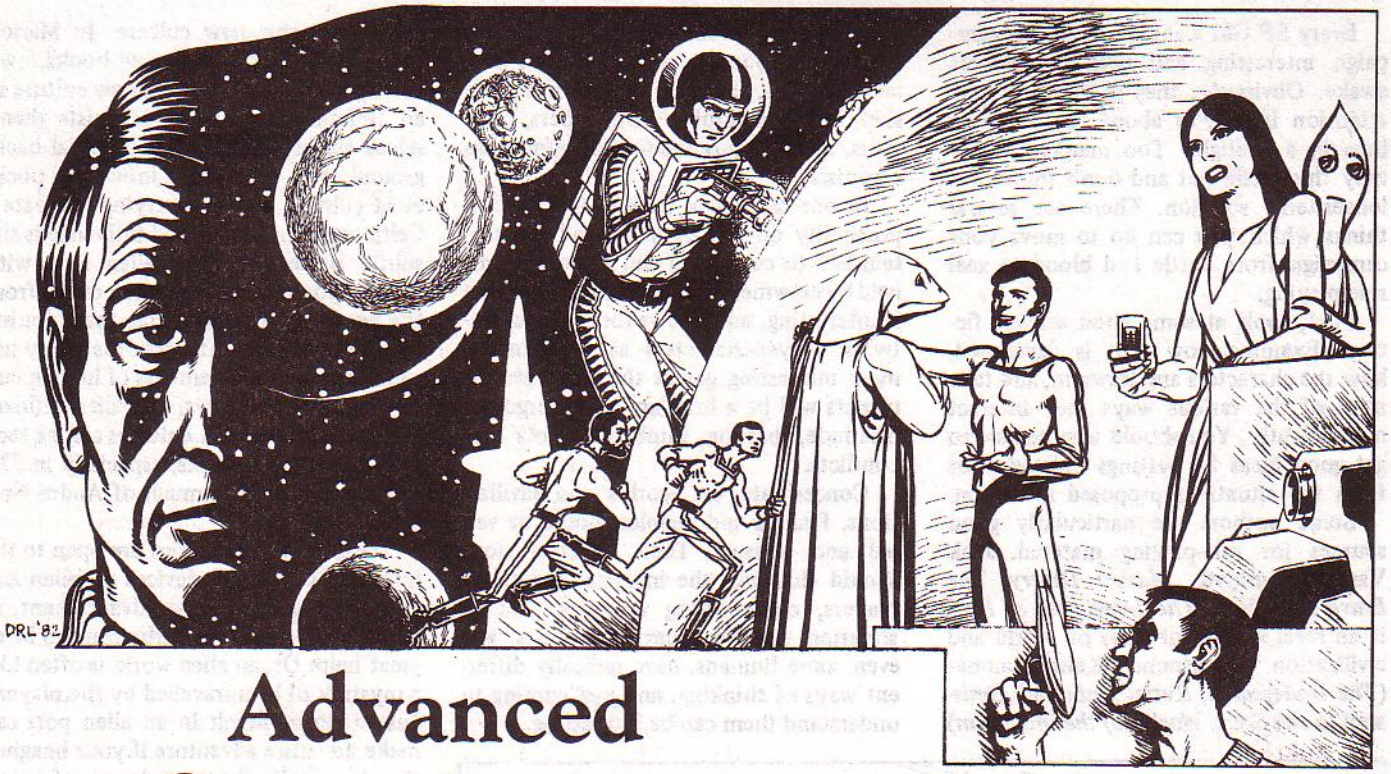
Speaking of scenarios, I consider Scenario Three (the meeting engagement) the best overall test of generalship, Scenario Four the bloodiest, and Scenario Five the most complex. My own favorite, predictably, is Scenario Five. Anything titled "Death from Above" strikes a fancy in some particularly perverted part of my psyche. Any Panzer general would find something romantic in having an entire armored Marine Corps in orbit, dropping directly onto a capital city complex (defended by a Guards division, no less). If I were commanding the marines, the death's head would be the unit insignia.

Parting Shots

Grav Armor was deliberately written in an historical style, as if the entire game depicted actual, historical events. I would be interested in hearing opinions about this on whether gamers prefer such an approach in science fiction. I am also curious about whether gamers found the last couple of pages of equipment and organizational notes more worthwhile than another (sixth) scenario.

The vehicle silhouettes on the counters depart slightly from the original concepts, which were all very low, sleek, and virtually impossible to distinguish from one another. The vehicle on the cover is *not* a 2957 Cadillac ***Car Wars*** refugee, but a Del-1 with a non-standard laser design. Like book covers, it is an example of what happens when the game designer tells the art director, who adds his own interpretations, and then tells it to the artist, who adds his own interpretations . . . Although the painting is technically very nice, I think everyone associated with Dwarfstar and Heritage hopes the game is such a success that we can consider a new cover sometime.

Any questions about problems or quirks in the rules are always welcome at Heritage and Dwarfstar. Those with any substance we keep on file, and try to integrate into updated printings, while issuing errata sheets for previous editions to keep them current as well.



Advanced Campaigning: Science Fiction

by David F. Nalle

Most high-tech SF games remove conflict from the human scale and render the character and his abilities less important than the capabilities of his equipment. This is like the problem in a high-power fantasy campaign, where there is so much magic around that that's what interacts, not the characters; the heroes are just beasts of burden for their artifacts. In an SF context this problem is worse, because the formidable weapons are usually available for open sale. Such weapons are more powerful than their wielders and tend to detract from the characters' humanity.

The reason this removes so much of the role-playing aspect in SFRPGs is that life is cheap. The valiant crew of the *Dybbuk* lifted off from Ishtar with high hopes. A few days out, they had an encounter with a Dantean raider intent on disrupting Ishtaran space traffic. The battle was brief. The Dantean had a better gunner. The *Dybbuk* was blown to bits; everybody died. Although most of the crew was skilled and they all had good characteristics, this made little difference to the brief encounter; a couple of poor rolls set a fate over which they had no control. This may have been a realistic simulation of space combat, but it certainly wasn't much fun for the crewmen who sat around and died with no chance to save themselves.

Life can be just as fragile on a planetary surface. Generally, a single shot from a laser or a high-powered rifle is deadly. It's not easy to develop a character when you know he's going to have a 50% chance of buying the farm in any combat, even if he is amazingly skilled and perfectly equipped.

You might think that the solution would be to provide defenses equal to the weapons, and thus balance everything out; but adding more combat machinery makes the character even less human, and makes him totally dependent on his equipment. This approach creates a vicious circle of arms escalation.

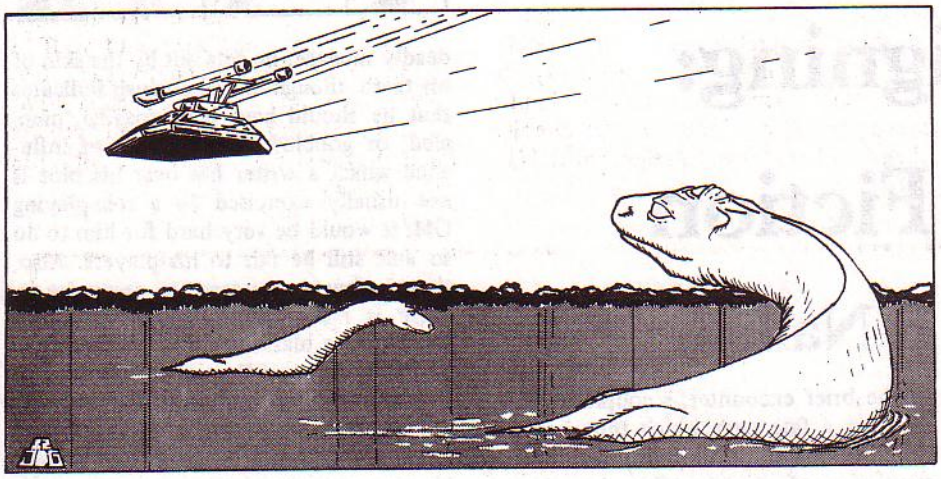
In most science fiction, central characters generally do not die with the realistic rapidity found in SF role-playing games. When Kimball Kennison faces down a deadly menace, he gets out by the skin of his teeth, though logical analysis indicates that he should have been roasted, mangled, or gobbled. The element of influence which a writer has over his plot is not usually exercised by a role-playing GM; it would be very hard for him to do so and still be fair to his players. Also, though few games seem to recognize it, there is much more to science fiction than blazing blasters and nuclear missiles. The bulk of any SF novel is taken up by non-violent interaction between the main characters and background characters. Keith Laumer's Retief doesn't go around blasting every Groaci he sees; the reader gets a lot more from the super-diplomat's efforts to outsmart and beguile the five-eyed aliens than if he just nuked their home world. This interaction and use of imagination is the true reward of the role-player.

In addition, most SF isn't terribly high-tech-combat oriented. Some popular civilizations use very few modern weapons, some control them by social or legal strictures; others have elaborate duelling codes. Some authors even maintain that combat would not be possible with light-speed vehicles in space, because evasion would be too easy and human reactions could not use even computer-assisted weapon systems effectively at such velocities. In good SF, as in real life, the gun exists more as a threat than as a weapon of common use. The knife and the fist are more believable weapons for common use, and in the vastness of space, battle can possibly be evaded.

Every SF GM wants to make his campaign interesting and keep his players awake. Obviously, they're going to pay attention if they're about to lose their lives in a firefight. Too many GMs use only this facile out and don't think of a longer-term solution. There are several things which you can do to move your campaign from battle and blood to real role-playing.

First, look at some good science fiction. Examine how plot is developed, how the characters are drawn in, and take note of the various ways they interact non-violently. You should also be able to get good ideas for settings and scenarios from the situations proposed in fiction.

Some authors are particularly good sources for role-playing material. Jack Vance (*Emphyrio, Maske: Thaery, The Brave Free Men, The Languages of Pao*) is an ideal source for ideas on world and civilization background. Keith Laumer (*The Undefeated, Retief Unbound, Emissary to the Stars, Worlds of the Imperium*)



and Ron Goulart (*Big Bang, Calling Dr. Patchwork, The Robot in the Closet*) are excellent for interactive situations which don't end in death. Randall Garrett (*Earth Invader, Supermind*) and Keith Laumer are great for plot, as is Fred Saberhagen. Clifford Simak (*Project Pope, Way Station, The Goblin Reservation*) is the best for character development. Using these and other SF sources, you can get a wealth of ideas, situations, and plots which can start you towards developing your own. Most of the works mentioned have very little violent conflict and a lot of mental maneuvering.

The next step is to figure out how you can implement your ideas. My recommendation is that you deemphasize the space-trip. Violence tends to enter into a campaign when you spend much of your time trekking through endless space. Most interesting incidents between people take place in populated areas on planets. If you must spend time on space journeys, the best encounters are not battles with enemy ships, but conflicts within the ship, between unruly crewmembers, saboteurs, spies, or any manner of human antagonists.

In our campaign, mutiny was often a possibility on the *Dybbuk*, and the captain had to confiscate and secure all arms held by crewmembers. This kind of tension is interesting, and allows for interplay between player-characters as well. In the most interesting games the trip between planets will be a brief and soon-forgotten interlude, barring shipboard plots and conflicts.

Concentrate on worlds and civilizations. Planets and peoples should be varied and unusual. Their societies alone should challenge the imaginations of the players, complicating whatever plot or situation you have devised. Aliens, and even some humans, have radically different ways of thinking, and just coming to understand them can be interesting.

For example, two members of the *Dybbuk* crew set down on a new world which had shown signs of nuclear-level technology. On landing they immediately spotted the dominant species of flying, many-legged insectoids, and opened up with the standard "Take me to your leader" shuck and jive. The aliens did not speak Lingua Ishtar, so the crewmen had an elaborate pantomime to perform. This mystified the hosts even more, as they shared few physiological similarities with the squishy little visitors. Even if the carniverous native plant/animals hadn't eaten the crewmen, they wouldn't have gotten to the race's leader, as the society was totally anarchist.

Human civilizations can be just as alien as those of non-humans. When colonists are separated from their brothers by the gulfs of space, their culture can change considerably over a very few generations. Factors of environment and personality will shape this new culture. In Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Darkover* books, two factors operate to create a new culture in an isolated world. The colonists themselves are primarily Gaelic in racial background, with a large and influential pocket of cultural revivalists trying to create a Celtic utopia. The second influence is the subtle presence of an alien race with strange powers, and stranger powers from the world itself which force the colonists to adapt radically. The result is a very unusual hybrid with elements of human culture, ancient folkways, and alien influences. Similar amalgam cultures can be seen in Jack Vance's works, especially in *The Grey Prince*, and in much of Andre Norton's work.

Many plot possibilities are open to the inventive GM. Such devices as fallen empires, lost races of great advancement, or struggles to rise from barbarism can be of great help. Or, an alien world is often like a mystery to be unravelled by the players. Just ordering lunch in an alien port can make an entire adventure if your imagination is up to it; there are dozens of points where misunderstanding and cultural confusion are possible.

Next, look at combat. It doesn't really have to be as realistic as it is set out in most rule systems. The threat of violence should be sufficient in many cases. If you do get into a firefight, allow the players some latitude; let them use terrain for cover, and give them a chance to get to it before they are blown away.

The future is also supposed to be advanced culturally as well as technologically. Civilized people don't blow each other away indiscriminately. Establish some value of human life in your campaign. Take prisoners, use subduing weapons. The only people who actually try to kill without good justification are maniacs and assassins. If you can bring violence in check, your player-characters will live longer, and will have a chance to develop personalities.

Finally, consider the variety of science fiction genres. Traditional SF role-playing takes place in space and on other planets in the fairly-distant future. However, some of the best SF sub-genres for role-playing are the near-future, post-holocaust, paratemporal, and time-travel variants. Some games have been designed for role-playing post-holocaust, but for the most part these are unsatisfying.

Near-future role-playing uses an Earth-based setting, with mostly human characters, and explores the possibilities of early space travel, colonization, and first contact with alien races. There are as many possibilities here as in any other background, and the violence and scope of ad-

ventures tends to be naturally limited.

Post-holocaust situations are fairly similar, taking place after civilization as we know it has been destroyed. What most GMs of this sort of game don't think about is that such destruction need not be atomic in nature. Ecological destruction and economic collapse are good possibilities, as is conventional warfare and conquest by other nations, or even by aliens.

Para-temporal situations are also promising. They have been treated brilliantly in the fiction of Keith Laumer (*Worlds of the Imperium*) and H. Beam Piper (*Lord Kalvan of Other When, Paratime*). This type of background supposes that there are many parallel worlds where Earth's history went a little differently; the result is a parallel but variant civilization. Every point in history might be a branching point where a different choice was made and history has been changed. For your campaign, players would be able to travel between these parallel worlds by machine or other methods, and might be involved in trade, colonization, exploitation, or even conquest.

The time-travel setting parallels the previous one, but deals with travel linearly in time, into the past or future, with all of the adventure possiblities inherent in that. Of particular note is the possibility of combining these two in a "Time Patrol" setup where there is the possibility of altering the course of history and creating alternate worlds. Linear time travel also has the benefit of making a whole range of periods available to the GM from the pre-Stone Age to the far future.

There are several rule systems available which treat near-future or similar SF variants, though none which attempt time-travel rules. ***Champions*** is probably the best among many superhero games available, but the true SF aficionado may want to pass such games over. Post-holocaust games such as ***Metamorphosis Alpha, Gamma World,*** and ***Morrow Project*** also abound, but are not very thrilling. Few of the superhero or post-holocaust games are really satisfactory.

If you choose to expand your SF play into an unusual context, a good bit of work will be required. After finding a rule system which you like, it will have to be adapted to suit the background which you are setting up. I would recommend ***Traveller, Space Quest,*** or ***Space Opera*** as good starting points, because they tend to be fairly comprehensive and not heavily oriented towards some peculiarity of character or genre. It is easier to limit a system which is too futuristic or complex than it is to redesign a system which is insufficient to your needs.

There is a great deal of SF role-playing material on the market, and what system you choose to use doesn't really matter. What makes all the difference is the attitude which you (as GM) choose to take. Many rule-systems tend to force a particular point of view or attitude on the GM. As a result they may not provide source material for the type of world which you may want to run. If you decide to go with an original SF background, you will have to face the task of setting up all of the background and support material yourself. This is hard work, but you will be rewarded with a system and campaign which is unique and interesting.

The aim of all these suggestions is to develop imaginative role-playing in SF gaming where it has been lacking far too often. It is easy to rely on standard formulae and traditional settings and styles, but if you do so you aren't getting all that you could out of the vast potential of science fiction. SF is as much fun as fantasy is, and there is no reason why it can't be role-played as well as fantasy is. As an SF GM you should take the initiative and try to make more of your SF campaign than blood and blasters. Give your player-characters a chance at survival in an interesting universe and both you and they will reap the rewards of better role-playing.

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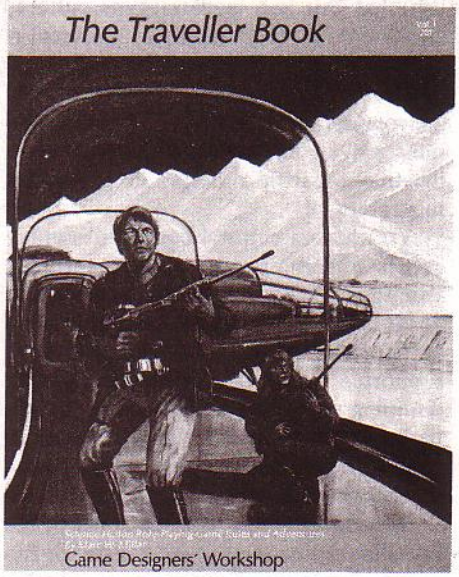

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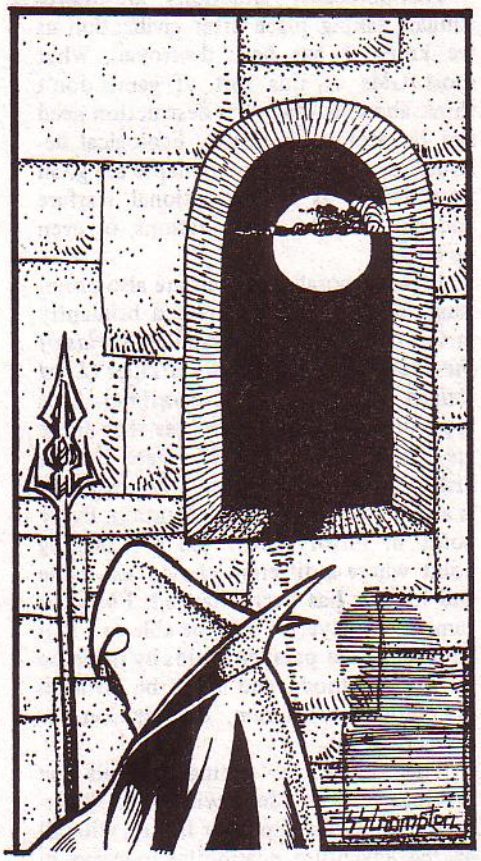
Advanced Campaigning: Fantasy

by Aaron Allston



"You know," said the lout, "you could write up our characters' adventures and print 'em, and they'd be just like swords & sorcery stuff already in print."

"You know," I wanted to tell him, "I don't know anyone moronic enough to want to read zero-grade fantasy about a bunch of supermen with no personality traits who wander around killing things and taking loot; where twenty-five adventurers ride up on an illogically orderly array of thirty griffins and kill 'em all; where twenty of the heroes lose their lives in the battle and are undramatically revived by a ring of wishes ten minutes later; where they come across the griffins' cave and the party leader, a defender of Law and Justice, orders one of his men to trigger the trap so that *he* doesn't get blown up – you're telling me that this rates alongside Howard and Tolkien and Dunsany and Carter and de Camp?"

I wanted to tell him all that, but forebore. I'd seen and heard enough. We'd upheld Right and Honor, slaying gargoyles and griffins and beholders and warriors; we'd massacred orcs and goblins and other nasties; and we'd been hailed as heroes of the people. What people? After months of playing, I still couldn't tell you. Neither could the GM. What was the name of the world? Of the continent? The kingdom? (We knew it was a kingdom because everything was a kingdom.) The nearest town? If we were so powerful and awesome, why couldn't we parlay that into political clout?

In "Remedial Role-Playing" (January, 1982), Ron Pehr and I discussed some of the factors leading toward hack-'n-slash Montie Haul campaigns, and some of the things that can be done to counter them. Here, I want to expand on that theme – how do you take an FRP campaign and turn it into something that *could* be written up as heroic fantasy fiction?

The World, Part II

Once you have your initial game setting – the frontier town with the madman's labyrinths a day's ride west, or whatever – you can sit down and think more about the overall campaign setting. That is, if your characters ever want the option of adventuring elsewhere.

What are the features of, say, a continental civilization? It has people; it has political divisions; it has an economy, a social structure, a culture, religions, settlements, a history, and so on. It's not necessary to fully chart out each of these things, but if the players are to have faith in their setting, then each topic must be touched on.

Say you take the easy out, and establish that this is a medieval-type culture, equivalent to (for example) thirteenth-century Western Europe. Fine. That's a popular civilization type, and completely appropriate for FRPGs. Conveniently, most players know enough about the civilization to avoid ordering Post Toasties in a tavern.

You have a cultural equivalent, which carries with it a rough social structure for you to work with – feudalism, crowned heads supported by powerful and semi-autonomous nobles, who are, in turn, supported by lesser nobles, everybody dumping on the serfs. For a little variety, perhaps you choose to throw in a stable trade system and middle class, with organized guilds.

With most RPGs, you get some of the raw data for economy: price lists for frequent purchases, sometimes an earning rate for various jobs and occupations, occasionally entire histories of monetary systems and conversion charts. If you're satisfied that you can answer most of your players' questions about money, then you're in good shape.

Religion is also an easy one to handle – it takes only a few minutes of thought to set the culture as monotheistic, pantheistic, or whatever, and settle on the names and motifs of the primary deities. This is more important in game systems requiring religious trappings (such as the clerics in D&D), but is useful everywhere.

Political divisions are also fairly simple to undertake. For instance, in the example mentioned earlier, you know that most civilized areas will be divided into kingdoms which are then further divided into duchies, counties, baronies, shires, and so on, with cities and townships here and there. A little logic on that topic is useful; it's more likely that a major city will be near fertile lands and river accesses than in tundra.

For every political division, there will be someone, possibly lots of folks, in charge: the queen, the grand duke, the guildmaster, the councilman, the knight bachelor; and if religion plays an important part in the grand scheme (which it usually does), the religious leaders will carry political clout. The areas they choose to oversee may or may not have any relationship to political divisions. You can be as simple or as complex with this as you like.

So you have the raw cultural framework you need. On to –

NPCs and Socializing

Now that you have a world for the characters to adventure upon, it may occur to you that they probably come from there. Oddly enough, most of the people in real life come from the planet they live on, and the same may be said of many characters in fantasy fiction.

And if they come from somewhere, they come from, well, *somewhere.* The gamemaster will want to establish some way to determine from whence on the world the characters come. Perhaps they can choose, perhaps they roll randomly, perhaps the GM decides arbitrarily – but they should be from somewhere.

That "somewhere" label isn't just geographic, it's also social. Once again, the GM can settle on any number of ways to determine from which social strata the character comes. This shouldn't prove too terribly vital to the grand scheme of things – after all, the character's current orientation is more important than the fact that his father was a blacksmith. But it can provide a starting ground for role-playing; just as importantly, it can provide the GM with ideas about adventures.

If one or more of the characters turn out to be fairly high in the social strata, then the party could be structured as "nobles with their retinue." This *won't* mandate that various characters continually be subservient to others – far from it. If one noble character becomes too haughty, too demanding, insisting that others take the risks while he gets the lion's share of the rewards due to his status, the other characters can always mutiny. One quick knife in the back, and they change their names, move far away, and become mercenaries. In years of playing in campaigns where nobles and commoners interact regularly, I've seen no such disputes or hurt feelings – a character is not going to continually ride another character when they often have to work together in life-threatening circumstances.

If most of the characters in a campaign are of a particular origin and/or social level, then the campaign itself will probably be arranged to reflect their perceptions. That is, a campaign where fifty percent of the players are members of a mercenary band is not going to concern itself overmuch with high-level, behind-the-scenes political wheeling and dealing. When all the characters belong to a players' troupe, the likelihood that the campaign will deal with momentous wars between mighty empires is reduced.

So here we turn to the question of NPCs. Of all the ways to introduce flavor and a sense of consistency to a campaign, the NPC is one of the easiest. I'm not just talking about the barkeep of the tavern the adventurers visit once, or some hapless armorer they try to sell a fake magical sword to, but the *important* NPCs: the regulars, the bit players, the relatives, the rulers.

It's not necessary to draw up every second cousin of every character active in the campaign. But return to the example of the players' troupe for a moment. If it's a travelling troupe based out of a capital city, then the players are likely to meet the local guildmaster on a regular basis. Local rulers who frequently engage their services – whether for playing or for adventuring – are a good bet. Rival players and members of the characters' troupe are likely candidates. Recurrent villains (less common with fantasy RPGs than other types, but hardly unknown) should naturally be worked up.

If the campaign is more political (back to the nobles and their retinue again), then highly-placed movers and shakers would be good to work up. This shouldn't necessarily be done in a mad spree of character-building before the campaign starts; it should be *started* then, and added to regularly as the campaign progresses.

All this work gives the players the impression of living in a world in which they are not the centers of existence; it impresses upon the characters that the world would continue without them. This removes some of the (literal) egocentrism common to campaigns.

This work also ties the characters more firmly into their world. They can have old friends to visit, or who can visit them, perhaps bringing a request for adventuresome aid or some significant pieces of information. The characters can have long-standing rivals and nemeses.

The prospect of characters' having friends, enemies, casual acquaintences, lovers, employers, and so on to interact with tends to humanize them – making them more than a set of statistics on a piece of paper.

Goals

In the FRP campaign I've played in most during the last two years, treasure-hunting has not been a very popular vocation. It's not that there isn't critter-guarded gold out there to be won – there is. And it's not as though the characters don't like riches – far from it.

But the GM, simply enough, has chosen to de-emphasize money-chasing. Characters tend to receive regular stipends, the amount based on their social levels. In addition, their various adventures through the year net them enough to get by on with reasonable comfort. The characters aren't saving up to buy a castle or three; they'd have to achieve appropriate social levels for the rulers to permit them to do so, and characters achieving such a level are likely to be awarded a fief with such a structure on it already.

All this removes much of the temptation to accumulate vast amounts of gold. Instead, the GM can orient the campaign toward adventure with less monetary motivation – spy missions, rescue operations, bandit-hunting, diplomatic voyages, siege operations, wars, explorations, etc.

Which brings us back to the point of this article. "Adventurers kill griffins, come back to life, kill gargoyles, come back to life, ambush a caravan, kill beholders" – that's not heroic fantasy, it's a random series of unconnected butcheries.

But the adventures to reopen the dwarves' trade routes, the fall of Caer Lethe, the rescue of Hara, the investigations into the Brotherhood of Morrigan – these were *adventures.* These could be put on paper with the confidence that they contain the elements of the cracking good adventure tale: well-rounded characters, defined plots, conflict (not merely physical), despair, mystery, horror (in small enough doses that the players don't become jaded), and on, and on.

It should mean something that the authors I mentioned earlier didn't construct their stories by rolling them off tables. Shouldn't it?

METAL

by John Rankin

Licensing for Fun and Profit

Licensing agreements, which have become a fixture in the adventure gaming industry in recent years, may be divided into two broad categories. The first type attempts to cash in on the mass-market appeal of a popular movie or book. Such arrangements can be, but not necessarily are, prohibitively expensive to the average game or miniatures company. If you think, for instance, that a line of "Star Wars" spaceships might be just the thing to launch your new miniatures company, forget it. For starters, you're looking at up-front money in six figures, months of work by your $120-an-hour lawyer, and enough clauses, conditions, and royalties to make such a deal unthinkable to anyone smaller than a Milton-Bradley or Parker Brothers. Deals for the rights to lesser works can be had; Heritage's recent "Conan" line is an example. But whether enough of a crossover audience exists to make such arrangements truly worthwhile is arguable.

The second, and far more prevalent, form of licensing involves hitching your star to an already-popular game. In today's market, virtually any game is a fair target. But for all practical purposes, we're talking about ***Traveller*** and the granddaddy of them all, ***Dungeons & Dragons.***

Both GDW and TSR were easy to do business with a few years ago. Now we find licenses not being renewed and new agreements increasingly hard to come by. The reasoning behind this change may seem a bit cold-hearted until one understands the market forces at work.

When a game is new and striving for popularity, a generous licensing policy makes sense. The manufacturer isn't so much interested in money as he is in exposure for his product. Supplements or miniatures with his name on them mean more advertising, more retailer shelf space, more reviews – in short, everything he needs to *expand* the market for his own line. Once that line is successful, a totally different set of factors comes into play. *Protecting* one's market becomes the paramount consideration. This means higher licensing fees for those who would cash in on a winner, and it means being much more selective about who does cash in. After all, if a game publisher has an audience buying literally millions of dollars worth of his products annually, it doesn't pay to offend aficionados by allowing marginal or even inferior items to enter the marketplace in an "official" capacity.

While this whole process may seem a bit cruel, keep in mind that a number of companies producing quality licensed material have flourished. In the miniatures industry, there is no better example than –

Grenadier

The fact that you're reading this magazine means you're already a member of what is known as the "buff" market. It may surprise you that most D&D players don't read gaming magazines, nor do they attend conventions. Their knowledge of gaming products is often limited to what's on the shelf at their local retailer. As Grenadier markets the only officially-licensed AD&D miniatures, it's easy to see how they've acquired a huge mass market acceptance for their line. Concentrating on mass retailers such as J.C. Penney and Sears, Grenadier is also the only miniatures company to sell to Toys 'R' Us, a huge chain which will account for nearly 20% of total toy sales in the U.S. in 1982.

Another reason for Grenadier's mass market penetration is their packaging, an area in which they beat the competition hands-down. Most figures come in boxed sets containing 10-20 castings. Boxes have die-cut foam inserts which provide individual storage compartments for the figures. Attractive packaging is a virtual necessity these days, so satisfying this need with something that gives the consumer added value is an attitude to be commended. Watch for other manufacturers to follow suit.

A final reason for Grenadier's success is price. Now, I personally don't pay attention to what a figure costs if it's what I want. (Such things are, after all, necessities.) To others, particularly younger gamers, price can be a very big factor, and here again, Grenadier takes the prize. Boxed figures come in at about 70 cents apiece, which is way below the $1.00 average most companies charge.

Grenadier's design staff consists of Andy Head (***Orcs' Lair***), John Dennette (***Monsters and Terrors***), and Ray Rubin, who occasionally does animals. Freelance designs are also frequently used. The strong point of Grenadier's line is monsters (easily among the best in the business); the weak point is human types (easily among the worst currently available). New releases do show considerable improvement in this area. In this respect, the boxed sets represent something of a mixed blessing, as figures of vastly differing quality may be found in the same package. Balancing this somewhat is the fact that Grenadier's overall quality control is excellent.

Grenadier's "AD&D" license comes up for renewal on January 1st, 1983. TSR would like to buy Grenadier. Unsubstantiated rumors are currently floating around the industry that TSR even went so far as to imply that license renewal might not be forthcoming if the sale didn't go through. Such rumors should always be taken with a grain of salt (jealousy starts many of them) and Grenadier emphatically denies the stories. What *is* confirmed is that TSR and Grenadier are seriously talking merger. It's a move that probably makes good economic sense for both parties. Look for Grenadier to become a division of TSR by year's end.

Next month –

Doshes? Upside down ads? Live figures? Is this alien entity terminally cute . . . or crazy like a fox? Journey with us off-planet to find out what's really going on at Martian Metals.

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Owned by: Above people in the form of Canterbury Pewter.
Employees: 40
Number of figures sold in 1981: 6,500,000

NECROMANCER

A Tactical Fantasy Game for Two Players

Game design by Allen Varney
with special thanks to Eric Robinson
Development by Steve Jackson
Illustrated by John Borkowski / Counter art by Denis Loubet / Map graphics by J. David George
Playtesters: J. David George, Denis Loubet, Forrest Johnson, Alan Mandell,
Elisabeth Barrington, John Rankin, Rob Kirk

The rocks of the valley were cruel, but the soldiers made no complaint. Indeed, few of them had lips to frame a protest. The wizard's troops were beyond pain or even fear of death. They were already dead.

From his zombie-borne palanquin, the wizard glowered at the rock-strewn wilderness around him. His inner eye saw farther. Nothing lived in that desert – but something moved. A small group of shadowy forms, little more than grave-dust in the shape of a man. Wraiths! But not his. He wondered who his rival was. Only another necromancer would control a wraith – or know of the Miasma and covet its treasure.

Soundlessly, the wizard urged his shambling force to greater speed. His foe's punishment would be death. The Jewels would be his!

1.0 Introduction

Necromancer is a tactical fantasy game for two players, simulating a pitched battle between two wizards. The Necromancers have raised their troops from the dead: zombies, animated skeletons, and wraiths. Themselves utterly mindless, the undead warriors are only conduits for the Necromancers' magical energy. Thus a wizard may "take over" enemy troops. However, the more units a Necromancer must control, the weaker his hold becomes on each one – and the more vulnerable he is to counterattack.

In the magicians' land there lurks a strange magical mist called the "Miasma," which contains one or more of the three "Jewels of Power." Each wizard may send his troops into the Miasma to search for these Jewels. But to send a warrior into the cloud is to risk the chance that it may automatically be "converted" to his opponent's side – even after it has found a Jewel!

2.0 Components

2.1 *Map.* The map is an array of hexagons ("hexes") 23 long by 17 wide, depicting the plateaus, passes, and canyons of the battleground. Each hex represents an area about fifteen meters (49 feet) across. Different types of terrain are indicated on the map by different colors and symbols; these terrain types have differing effects on the units moving across them. There are four types of terrain and two types of "hexsides."

2.11 *Plateau.* These are clear hexes, representing flat, open ground. Units may enter plateau hexes at a cost of one Movement Point (MP) per hex. Units attack and defend normally while in these hexes. There are four levels of plateau, shaded from dark (Level 1, the lowest) to light (Level 4, the highest).

2.12 *Slope.* These are hexes connecting plateaus at different levels. Each slope hex costs 2 MP to enter. Units in slope hexes defend normally, but attack at half their combat strength, rounded down.

2.13 *Monolith.* These are stone pillars jutting high into the sky. No unit may enter a monolith hex. A monolith (at any level) blocks line-of-sight for indirect combat.

2.14 *Miasma Hexes.* Though not properly "terrain," the three double-spiral symbols on the mapsheet show the three possible centers of the Miasma in the game. In themselves, they have no effect on units. Treat these hexes as the underlying terrain. (For Miasma placement, see 7.2).

2.15 *Clear Hexside.* When two hexes are separated by a narrow line (like most of those on the map), then any unit may cross between them, paying the appropriate Movement Point cost.

2.16 *Cliff Hexside.* When two hexsides are separated by a heavy, irregular line, that hexside is blocked; no unit except a wraith may cross it. Cliff hexsides represent the boundaries of different plateaus. A unit which is forced to retreat across a cliff hexside is eliminated – crushed against the wall of a higher plateau, or dashed on the rocks of a lower one. Only indirect and boulder attacks may be made over cliff hexsides.

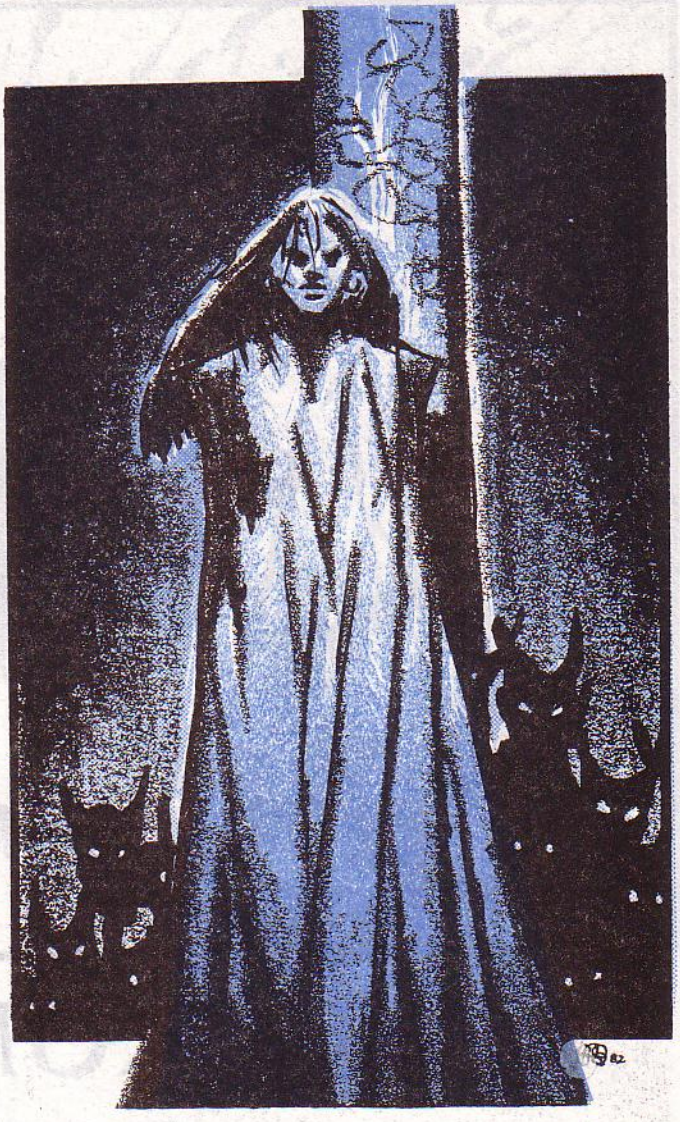
2.2 *Counters.* The 112 cardboard counters represent the undead warriors that the Necromancers use to fight their battles. There are also counters representing the Miasma, the Jewels of Power, and the wizards themselves. Each "undead" unit represents 10-12 of a single type of fighter. Some counters represent 2 or 3 units. Each counter shows an identifying initial and that unit's movement allowance, expressed as a number of Movement Points. Each counter is printed with black on one side, red on the other; which face is up shows which side the unit belongs to at that moment. There are four types of combat units, each with its own strengths, weaknesses, and special abilities:

2.21 *Necromancer.* The two Necromancer counters represent the "red" and "black" wizards who fight the battle via the undead units they control. They are also powerful in themselves: each Necromancer attacks directly with the power of two of his zombie units, and indirectly as two of his skeleton units. A wizard defends against enemy attacks with the value of his warriors' defense factor against boulder attacks (a number ranging from 8 to 12; see Section 6.23). Necromancers are also good at searching the Miasma and are the only units which can wield the Jewels of Power. However, each wizard ordinarily has a movement allowance of only 2 MP per turn. When one player's Necromancer is eliminated, the game is over.

2.22 *Zombie.* Zombies are powerful, comparatively slow fighters. They are hard for the enemy wizard to convert to his own side.

2.23 *Skeleton.* These are moderately strong and fast warriors, few in number, equipped with primitive bows and arrows. They are capable of direct and boulder attacks, just as other units are. They are the *only* units (other than the Necromancers) which can make indirect attacks (see Section 6.22).

2.24 *Wraith.* Wraiths are not strong, but are fast and numerous. They are very good at searching the Miasma (see Section 7.41). Wraiths are the only units that can cross cliff hexsides.



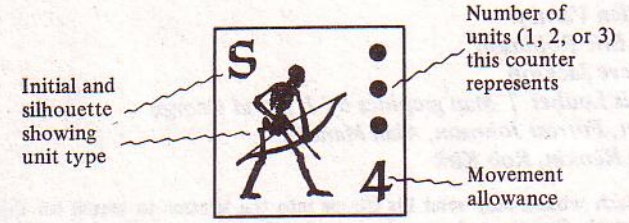
2.25 *Miasma.* These seven counters are not warrior units, but represent the magical mist that may contain one or more of the Jewels of Power. At the beginning of the game they are set up around one of the three double-spiral symbols on the mapsheet. (Actually, eight Miasma counters are included in the game; the eighth is an extra.)

2.26 *Jewels of Power.* There are four of these; not all will be used in every game. A Jewel counter must be delivered to one of the Necromancers before its powers may be used (see Section 8).

2.3 *Charts and Tables.* These are provided on page 29.

2.4 *Other Components.* Players will also need two 6-sided dice (not provided), and pencil and paper to keep track of their Conversion Points.

Key



Left to right: Level 1 plateau (the lowest), Level 2 plateau, Level 3 plateau, Level 4 plateau (the highest), Miasma hex (shown on Level 1 plateau), and Monolith hex.

Slope hex. The shading on this hex shows it is considered to be Level 4 when figuring relative height in an indirect attack.

Cliff hexsides. Above is Level 3; below is Level 2. The "rocks" are always shown at the bottom of the cliff, to distinguish the higher and lower sides.

3.0 How the Game is Played

Necromancer, like most wargames, is played in "game-turns." One player follows a sequence of steps to move and fight with his units, and then his opponent follows the same sequence with his own units. This continues until one Necromancer is eliminated. Each step in the game-turn is called a "phase": movement phase, combat phase, etc.

The game-turn sequence for each player is as follows:

3.1 *Count Units.* The player counts all the friendly zombies, skeletons, and wraiths his Necromancer has on the map, totals them up into a single figure (not counting the Necromancer himself), and then consults the Conversion Track to find out how powerful the various units will be for that turn. The opponent's units attack, defend, etc., at the values they had the previous turn.

3.2 *Move.* The player moves none, some, or all of his units up to the limit of their respective movement allowances (the number at the bottom of the counter). At the end of this phase, those units which are subject to opportunity attack (see Section 6.24) may be attacked by enemy units, at the opponent's discretion. Units in enemy Zones of Control may not move at any time during this phase.

3.3 *Attempt Conversion.* The player may elect to try to convert enemy units in one or two hexes to the player's own forces, if the rules al-

low. The number of attempts allowed per turn is shown on the bottom line of the Conversion Track. Conversion procedure is given in Section 5. If the player has a Jewel that allows "free" conversion attempts, these are also made during this phase.

3.4 *Combat.* The player attacks enemy units according to the rules given in Section 6.

3.5 *Search.* Units in the Miasma may search for Jewels (see Section 7).

3.6 *Check for Miasma Conversion.* Friendly units in the Miasma are subject to Miasma conversion attempts. Roll on the "x1" column on the Conversion Table. For details, see Section 7.5.

When all Miasma conversion attempts on the player's units are resolved, his turn is over. The opponent's turn now begins, following the same six steps.

4.0 Movement

4.1 *General.* Players move none, some, or all of their units during their respective movement phases. Movement is measured by hexes, according to the movement allowance of each individual unit, expressed in Movement Points (MP). Each hex costs a unit a certain number of MP to enter. Each unit's movement allowance is printed on its counter. Movement Points may not be saved or accumulated from turn to turn; any points not expended in a single movement phase are lost.

4.2 *Terrain Effects on Movement* (see Section 2.1). *Plateau* hexes cost 1 MP to enter; *slope* hexes, 2 MP each; *monolith* hexes may *not* be entered at all.

4.21 *Cliff Hexsides.* Wraiths (and no other units) may cross cliff hexsides in either direction. To do so, a wraith must begin the turn adjacent to the cliff hexside to be crossed. After crossing the hexside, it may move no further: climbing up (or down) the cliff takes all its movement points.

4.3 *Zones of Control.* Each unit exerts a "zone of control" (ZOC) over the six hexes surrounding the hex it occupies. Any unit which enters one of the hexes around an *enemy* unit must *stop* its movement immediately and stay there until one of the two is eliminated or retreats because of a combat result, or the enemy unit is converted to a friendly unit. A unit which begins its movement phase in an enemy ZOC may not move that turn. ZOCs also affect combat; see 6.21. ZOCs *do not* extend across cliff hexsides, or into or out of the Miasma (see Sec. 7.3).

4.4 *Stacking.* Up to three units may occupy ("stack" in) the same hex at the end of each movement phase. They need not be of the same unit type. The number of black dots on a counter shows how many units that counter represents. Any number of units may pass *through* a given hex during movement; stacking restrictions apply only at the end of the movement phase. Necromancers, Jewels, and the Miasma do *not* count for stacking purposes; any number of these may occupy a hex along with (up to) three combat units.

Units may *never* enter a hex with enemy units!

5.0 Converting Enemy Units

5.1 *General. Necromancer* is unusual among wargames in that units may "change sides" at a moment's notice. The wizards' magical control of their warriors can ebb and flow according to the size of the forces they're handling. Stronger units like zombies, because of the greater magic they require to be animated, are more firmly in the Necromancers' control (and so, are harder to convert) than weaker units like wraiths.

5.2 *Procedure.* During the friendly conversion phase, the player may announce an attempt (or two, rules permitting) to convert an enemy unit *or stack of units* to the player's own control. The player identifies which unit(s) the attempt will be made against and consults the Conversion Track. This track gives the strength of both players' units, each enemy unit's resistance to conversion, and the number of conversion attempts allowed per conversion phase. These factors are regulated by the number of units each player has. The more units you have, the less powerful each unit is, and the less resistant it is to conversion. For example, if player A has a total of 38 units (not counting the Necromancer), then A falls under the "35-44" column on the track, and each of A's zombies has a strength of 10 and a resistance of 8; each skeleton has a 7-6 (strength 7, resistance 6); each wraith, a 3-3. Furthermore, A is allowed only one conversion attempt per turn. Player B, on the other hand, has only 25 units (again, not counting the Necromancer), and so falls under the "17-25" column of the track. Each unit of B's force is more powerful, and B is allowed up to two conversion attempts per turn. (Attempts are measured by *hexes*, not units. Three units converted in one hex counts as one attempt.) Note that if B converts any of A's units during this turn, the newly-converted units would become *more* powerful, rising to match the strengths of B's other units of that type. Note: Unit strength, resistance, etc., is calculated *once* per turn, at the beginning of the turn, and does not change during that turn.

The *resistance* (the second number) is the one used in any conversion attempt. The resistances of all units in the target hex are totalled and the player announces how many of a set supply of "Conversion Points" (CP) will be allocated to the attempt. (The beginning CP supply is determined by the scenario; scenarios are listed in Section 9.) The number of CP used should be exactly 1, 2, 3, or 4 times the total resistance of the units in the stack. Roll one die and consult the appropriate column of the Conversion Table. Results are applied as follows:

No Effect. The unit is not converted. The conversion points are *kept for use in a later attempt.* If a player is allowed a further conversion attempt that phase, he *may* try to convert the same unit(s) again.

Converted. The unit is "possessed" by the player. The counter is immediately turned over to display the "friendly" side. Each converted unit now moves, fights, and is regarded for *all* purposes, as a friendly unit, starting immediately. CPs are lost and marked off the total.

Eliminated. The struggle of magical forces proved too great for the unit(s) to bear. All units in that hex are eliminated from play. *All CPs allocated to that attempt are* lost!

5.3 *Stacks.* Units in a hex must be converted as a stack. Individual units within a stack may *not* be converted separately. Total the resistance of all units in a hex and treat as a single number.

5.4 *Effects of Necromancer on Conversion.* The enemy Necromancer, units stacking with him, and units in the six hexes around him (whether in his ZOC or not) may *not* be converted. All other enemy units are potentially vulnerable to conversion. Note that units adjacent to the friendly Necromancer are immune to conversion even while in the Miasma; rolls for automatic conversion are not made for them.

5.5 *Altering the Procedure.* The "conversion scenario" (9.2) and an optional rule (10.1) make slight alterations in the conversion procedure. Note these differences before playing the scenario or using the rules.

6.0 Combat

6.1 *General.* Combat occurs between two or more opposing units in the combat phase according to the conditions below. The player whose turn it is attacks, and the opposing player defends. Exception: "Opportunity attacks" are made by the opponent, at the end of the friendly movement phase (see Section 6.24).

6.2 *Procedure.* Units attack once per turn, but they may *be* attacked any number of times per turn. Attacks are resolved separately and in

whatever order the attacking player wishes. Enemy counters in a single hex defend as a unit. Friendly units in different hexes may combine their forces to attack enemy units in one or more hexes. Friendly units stacked together may split to attack enemy units in different hexes if the owning player wishes.

Combat is of four types: direct, indirect, boulder attack, and opportunity attack.

6.21 *Direct.* These are attacks against enemy units *in the attacker's ZOC.* All enemy units in friendly ZOCs *must* be attacked during the combat phase, though not necessarily by the unit whose ZOC they are in. The strength of the attacking unit(s) is determined from the Conversion Track (see Section 3.1); defending units defend at the value they had the previous turn. The combat strengths of the attackers in a single combat are totalled and compared to the total strength of the defender(s). The comparison is expressed as a numerical ratio (e.g., 2-1, 1-3), rounded *down* in the defender's favor. (Examples: If 4 zombies of strength 6 attack 2 skeletons of strength 5, the point ratio (24 to 10) is rounded down to 2-1. 15 to 10 = 1-1. 16 to 17 = 1-2.) Attacks at 5-1 or greater odds are an automatic DE (defender eliminated) result; attacks at less than 1-3 odds are automatically AE (attacker eliminated).

After determining the ratio, roll two dice and cross-index the result with the proper column on the Combat Results Table (see Section 6.5).

6.22 *Indirect.* All units may engage in direct combat, but only the Necromancers and their skeleton units may make indirect (i.e., missile) attacks. Indirect attacks are of two types, depending on range:

(a) Attacks made against enemy units *two* hexes distant, on identical or *lower* terrain. Intervening units do not block these attacks. Monoliths or higher terrain *do* block indirect attacks at a 2-hex distance. A unit may not attack over a cliff-edge unless it is adjacent to that edge.

(b) Attacks made from a lower hex to an *adjacent* higher hex, or vice versa. Indirect attacks made from a plateau edge to the level below should *not* be confused with boulder attacks (see 6.23). The attacker gets a +1 on his die roll if he is attacking from above. He gets a -1 if he is attacking from below. If, in a single combat, some attackers are above their target and others are below, the modifiers cancel out.

Indirect combat proceeds as direct combat does, with two differences: Units attacking indirectly *ignore* all adverse combat results (retreat or elimination); and, at 2-hex range, attackers must have a clear line of sight to their targets. Line-of-sight is clear if a straightedge can be laid from any part of the attacker's hex to any part of the target hex without encountering an obstruction (monolith or higher terrain).

Indirect and direct methods *may* be combined in a single attack.

Note that Necromancers or skeletons engaged in *direct* combat with adjacent units suffer all adverse combat results, just as other units do.

Units making indirect attacks may *not* advance if their target retreats (see Section 6.6).

6.23 *Boulder Attacks.* These are attacks by units at the edge of a plateau against enemy units directly beneath – that is, through a *cliff* hexside, down to an adjacent foe on a lower level. Large rocks are thrown over; the Necromancer hopes they will start a large rockslide.

Boulder attacks proceed somewhat differently from ordinary combat. Attackers attack as usual, but each defending unit has a set defense strength, determined by the Conversion Track, which is used for any type of undead units in the defending hex. Procedure is as follows:

If an enemy unit is directly beneath one or more "edge" hexes occupied by friendly units, the attacker may announce a boulder attack. After determining the strength of the attacking units, the player consults the "defense factor against boulder attacks" line of the Conversion Track to see what value the opposing units defend at. The attacker's strength is compared to *this defending value* and expressed as a conventional combat ratio (see Section 6.21), which is then rolled normally on the CRT. As in indirect combat, attackers ignore adverse results and may not advance after an enemy retreat. For example, Black boulder-attacks with three zombies of strength 8 (total: 24) against Red, who has 36 units and so falls under the "35-44" column of the Conversion Track. *Regardless of the unit type(s) defending,* each Red unit defends with a strength of 11, so that each of the attacks is made on the 2-1 column of the CRT.

Since a boulder attack affects each unit separately, it can scatter a stack – destroying one unit, retreating another, and missing a third. Note that a boulder attack result of AR-1, AR-2, or DE will destroy the target unit.

Units in more than one "edge" hex may combine their strengths to boulder-attack a single lower hex they are all adjacent to; however, boulder attacks may *not* be combined with direct and indirect combat.

The Necromancer is not affected by boulder attacks; he is too powerful to fear such simple violence. (If the optional rules are being used, apprentices are also immune to boulders. Mercenaries and dragons defend against boulders with fixed strengths of 8 and 10, respectively.)

6.24 *Opportunity Attacks.* These are enemy attacks made "out of turn" at the end of the friendly movement phase. If a player's units *end* their movement beneath a plateau edge occupied by enemy units, the opposing player may make a boulder attack on them *before* the friendly player's combat phase begins. Similarly, if units *end* their movement in line-of-sight of an enemy skeleton (or Necromancer) and is within range, the skeleton (or wizard) may attack indirectly (see Section 6.22). Opportunity attacks involve indirect and boulder attacks only; direct attack is not allowed. Each unit undergoes *one* opportunity attack – either boulder or indirect – by as many enemy units as can participate. No unit may make more than one opportunity attack per turn. A unit never *has* to attack.

6.3 *Terrain Effects on Combat.* See Section 2.1.

6.31 *Slopes.* Units in slope hexes defend normally, but attack at half strength (rounded down). Exception: Necromancers (and, if they are being used, apprentices) attack at normal strength .

6.32 *Miasma.* Units in the Miasma defend normally but may not attack. They do not exert ZOCs. Units attacking into the Miasma subtract one from their roll (see 7.3). If a friendly unit's ZOC would take in an enemy unit *except for the fact that the enemy is in the Miasma,* a direct attack may still be made against that enemy at the -1 modifier.

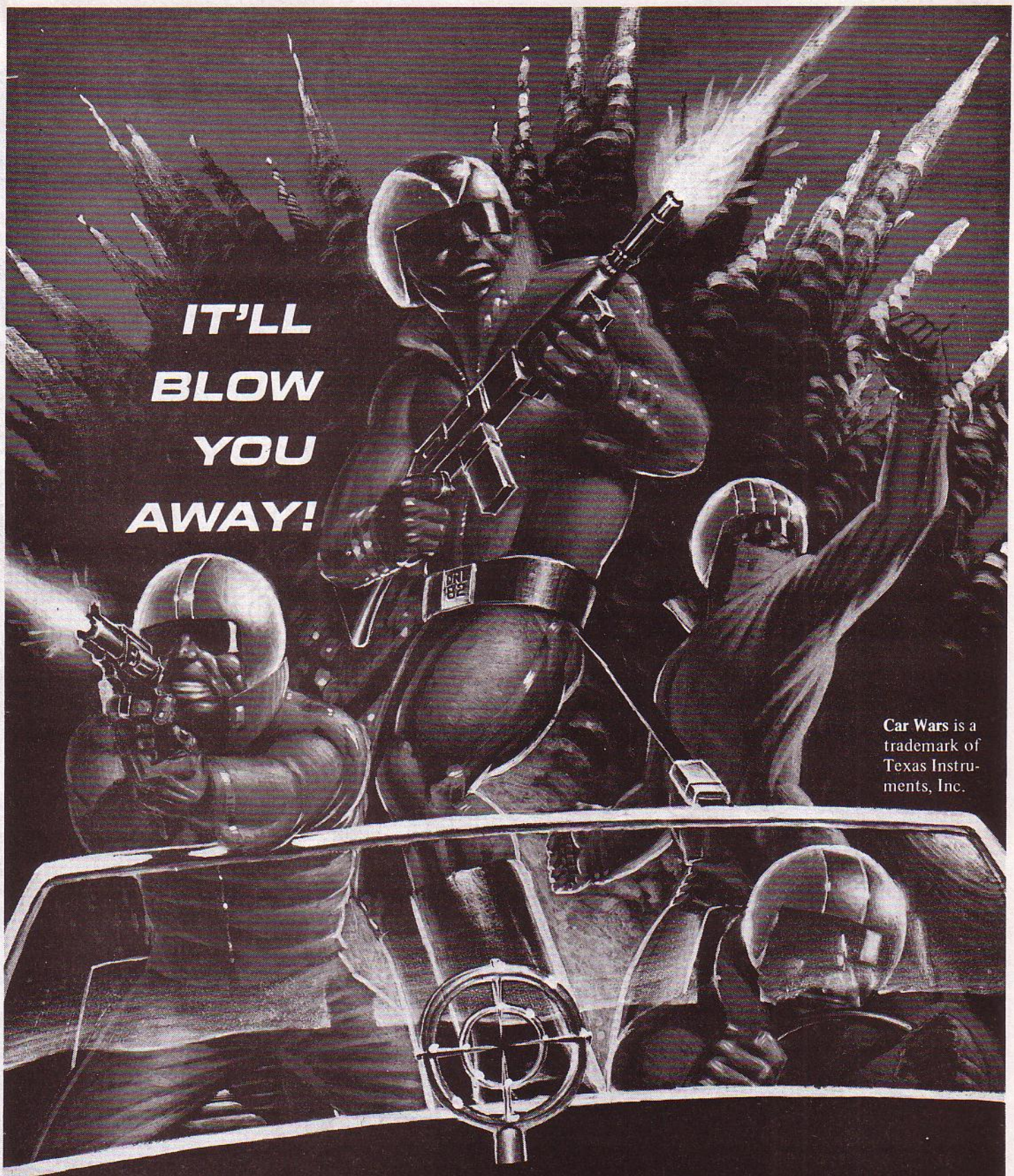
6.4 *Necromancer's Combat Abilities.* The Necromancer attacks directly with the strength of two of his zombie units (whatever their current value is), or indirectly as two of his skeleton units. If these units are completely eliminated at any point in the game, the Necromancer attacks at the value they would currently have if any were left. The Necromancer is completely immune to boulder attacks. His defense strength for all other purposes is equal to his units' defense against boulders, as determined by the Conversion Track. Example: If a wizard has 58 units, his direct-attack strength is 14, his indirect-attack strength is 10, and his defensive value is also 10.

6.5 *Explanation of Combat Results.* Results affect only the units involved in that combat, and are applied immeditely after the die roll.

6.51 *No Effect.* The attack has no result.

6.52 *Retreat.* A result of "attacker (defender) retreats" means that all units on the designated side must retreat *one hex* farther away from the attacker *if* they do not violate stacking and terrain restrictions. Retreating stacks must retreat as a unit. The owning player may choose to lose units instead of retreating them.

Restrictions on retreating: Friendly units in other hexes may be displaced or "pushed aside" to make way for retreating units, as long as



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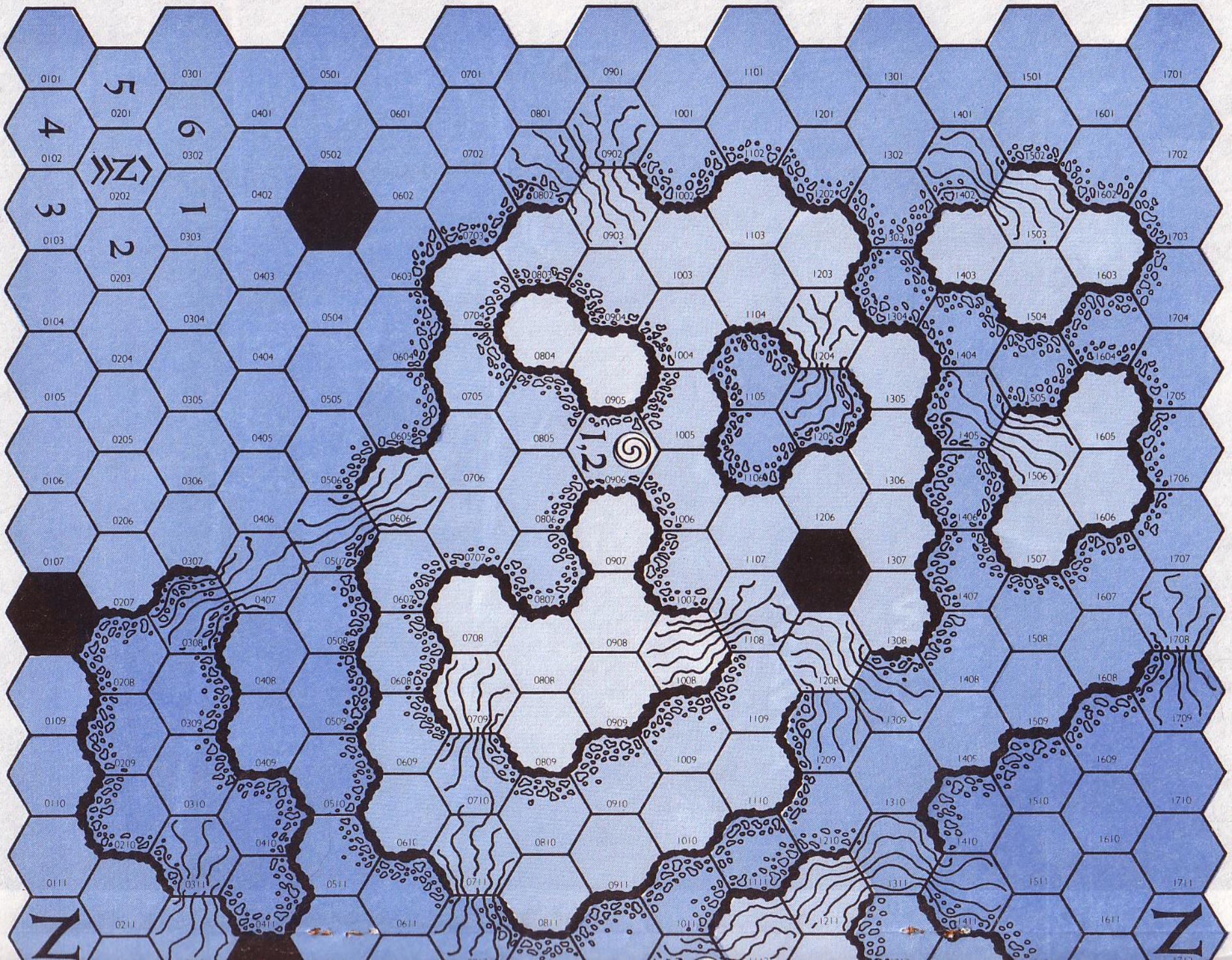
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these other units are not in an enemy ZOC. Units may also "suicide" over a cliff to make room for retreating units. Units may *not* retreat (a) onto a slope, (b) into an enemy ZOC, or (c) off the map. Units which cannot retreat, or must retreat over a cliff hexside, are eliminated. This *does* apply to wraiths. They can climb a cliff given enough time, but are destroyed like other units if forced suddenly to the edge. Units may advance to follow an enemy retreat; see Section 6.6.

If a unit carrying a magic item is forced to retreat and cannot, that unit is destroyed and the magic item remains in the hex that unit occupied. Exception: If the retreating unit is adjacent to a cliff edge, it may "retreat" over the edge. The unit is, of course, destroyed, but the magical item ends up in the hex below the cliff!

6.53 *Retreat Minus.* If a number ("-1" or "-2") follows a retreat result, the number indicates the number of units *per stack* removed from the retreating stack(s) and eliminated from play. Units removed are the owning player's choice. Other units retreat normally.

6.54 *Elimination.* All units on the designated side are eliminated and removed from play. (Eliminated units may not be "raised from the dead" again.)

6.6 *Advances After Combat.* When a unit is eliminated or retreats, any and all victorious units may occupy the vacated hex, stacking and terrain restrictions permitting. This does not apply to indirect or boulder attacks.

6.7 *Suicide.* In *Necromancer,* if units are eliminated, the surviving units become more powerful. Players might, therefore, flirt with the idea of ordering all their wraiths over the nearest cliff-edge so as to create a tremendously strong force of zombies. Mass suicide is hardly ever a good tactical idea. Still, there are special circumstances where it's best for an isolated stack of units to take the coward's way out. For example: You've just converted a stack of enemy wraiths who were about to deliver a Jewel to the enemy Necromancer, but they're cut off by enemy troops and there's no way to bring back the Jewel safely. Sending the wraiths (and the Jewel) over the nearby plateau edge (into the waiting arms of your skeletons below) might make good sense, even though the wraiths are lost (they were already dead anyway, right?). Therefore, units *are* allowed to throw themselves, lemming-like, over plateau edges during the owning player's movement phase. Jewels and other magic items are not damaged by this mistreatment. Wraiths, like other units, *can* suicide this way if ordered to. It costs only 1 MP to jump over a cliff edge.

7.0 The Miasma

7.1 *General.* The Miasma is a magical cloud of mist that carries within it "Jewels of Power." Units may search within the Miasma for these Jewels, but every turn they remain within the mist, they are subject to Miasma conversion attempts, which may turn them into enemy units – whether or not they've already found a Jewel.

7.2 *Placing the Miasma.* Before the players set up their units, a die is rolled to determine where on the map the Miasma is placed. The three double-spiral hexes on the map have numbers in their centers. The Miasma is placed on the center hex denoted by the roll, and the six hexes around it. If, for example, a "4" were rolled, the Miasma would be centered in the hex marked by the "3, 4" spiral symbol.

7.3 *Combat Within the Miasma.* Because of the twilit haziness of the mist, units within the Miasma *may not attack,* and do not exert ZOCs over adjacent hexes. However, they defend normally. Units outside the Miasma perceive those inside only dimly, so attacks from outside against units within it are resolved at a -1 (subtracted from the die roll). ZOCs do not extend into or out of the Miasma.

If units bearing a Jewel of Power enter a Miasma hex (searching for another Jewel, for example) and are subsequently attacked from outside and eliminated, the Jewel is *lost* in the mist and must be searched for again (and it may never be found; the Miasma is tricky).

7.4 *Searching the Miasma.* Units entering the Miasma may attempt to locate one or more of the Jewels of Power (see Section 8).

7.41 *Procedure.* Any number of Miasma hexes may be searched in a turn, but only those units occupying a given hex may search that hex. Each unit has a value for searching expressed in Search Points (SP). Each zombie has 1 SP; each skeleton, 2 SPs, wraiths, 3; and the Necromancer himself has 6 SPs. Add the SP values for all units searching in a given hex and consult the Search Table. Cross-index the SP number with the number of hexes the Miasma occupies this turn; the fewer hexes it occupies (due to previous searches), the easier it will be to successfully search a given hex and determine what it holds. The number(s) given at the intersection of the row and column represent the number(s) to be rolled on two dice for the search to succeed. Example: A player has two zombies and a skeleton in one Miasma hex, representing 4 SPs. The Miasma currently occupies five hexes, so the required die roll is 10 or more. The player rolls a 3, so nothing happens this turn.

When a hex is successfully searched, the searching player rolls one die to determine whether a Jewel has been found. On a roll of 1 or 2, a Jewel has been discovered; on a result of 3-6, the area has been thoroughly scavenged and found empty. The Miasma then vanishes from that hex (remove the counter) after one last attempt at "Miasma conversion" – see 7.5, below.

7.5 *Miasma Conversion.* The Miasma, being magical, can have strange effects on those who enter it. Specifically, it can convert units to the opposing side. A check is made at the end of each turn that units are in a Miasma hex. *Regardless of whether they have successfully searched that turn,* all units (except those stacking with or adjacent to the Necromancer) are subjected to an automatic conversion attempt on the "x1" column of the Conversion Table. This attempt is conducted in the same manner as a standard attempt, except that no Conversion Points are deducted from either side if the attempt is successful – this is a "free" conversion. No additions to or subtractions from the die roll are made.

8.0 The Jewels of Power

8.1 *General.* Players searching the Miasma may find one, two, or three Jewels of Power. (Four Jewel counters are included in the game; use the fourth if you want a longer game.) The Jewels can be quite useful, but a jewel's ability will be unknown until it is delivered to the Necromancer's hex by his undead minions. Until they reach the Necromancer, the units bearing the Jewel are, of course, subject to conversion by the opponent. Then they will bring the Jewel to *him* – unless the first player converts them back!

Once a Necromancer gains the Jewel, the owning player rolls two dice and consults the Jewel Table to learn its ability. A Jewel may be so powerful that it will allow one or two free conversion attempts, or increased mobility for the Necromancer or his units, or it may only be worth 20 extra CP – and rarely, it may actually even be harmful to the wizard himself! Both players learn the Jewel's effect simultaneously.

8.2 *Effects of the Jewels.* The various abilities a Jewel may have are listed below. A given effect takes place *immediately* where applicable; for instance, if the Jewel allows zombies an extra movement point, all the player's zombies gain that benefit in the same movement phase. Also, effects of Jewels are cumulative. In the above example, if the same player later secured another Jewel that gave the same movement bonus to friendly zombies, they would then have *two* extra movement points for the remainder of the game. Two "Necromancer attack halved" results would reduce the Necromancer to ¼ strength, rounded up.

Possible effects a Jewel may have:

Free Conversion Attempts: The Jewel gives the player either one or two "free rolls" at no CP cost on the "x3" column of the Conversion Table. These attempts may be made during any subsequent friendly conversion phase(s), *in addition to* the ordinary conversion attempts a player makes during a conversion phase. (This is a *total* of one or two free rolls – *not* one or two per turn.)

Necromancer Increased Movement: The Necromancer is given one additional MP, so that he now has 3 MP per turn. This benefit is applied immediately, and is permanent.

Zombie Movement Bonus or Skeleton Combat Bonus: Zombies are allowed one extra MP (see Necromancer bonus, above), or each skeleton unit has one point added to its combat strength, whatever it is on the Conversion Track. Benefits are applied immediately, and are permanent. Note that when skeleton units gain a combat bonus, so does the Necromancer in indirect attacks, where he attacks as two of his skeletons; see Section 6.4.

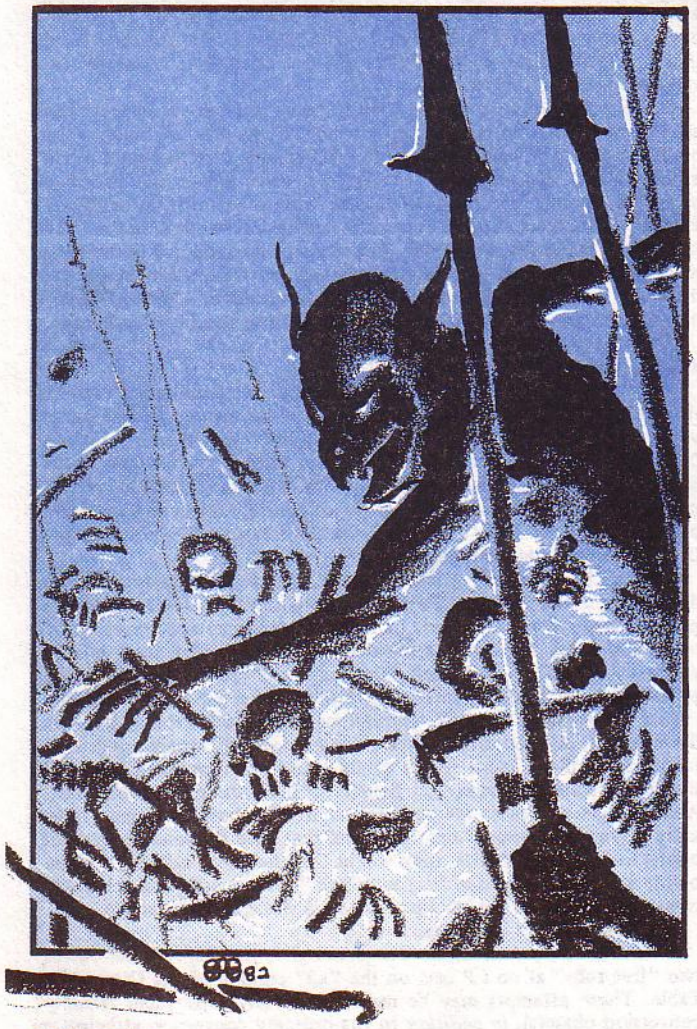
Additional Wraith Movement Phase: All friendly wraith units gain an additional movement phase *after* the regular friendly combat phase. All wraith units not locked in enemy ZOCs may move one hex in any direction, obeying stacking and terrain restrictions. Zombies and skeletons remain stationary. A wraith adjacent to a cliff may not cross it in this phase. A wraith *may* enter a slope hex in this phase.

20 Conversion Points: The owning player adds 20 CP to his total. The Jewel has no other effect.

Necromancer Attack Strength Halved: Sometimes a Jewel will have a detrimental effect on an unsuspecting wizard. When this result is rolled, the Necromancer's attack strength is immediately cut in half so that he attacks directly as only *one* of his zombies (not two), and indirectly as only one skeleton unit. However, he still defends normally, with his troops' boulder-attack defense strength. Other units stacking in the Necromancer's hex still defend normally; see Section 6.4. The Jewel's strength-reduction is permanent, even if the Jewel is abandoned.

8.3 *Effects of Combat.* Outside the Miasma, Jewels are not affected by combat. If all units in the hex with them are eliminated, the Jewel is left in the hex to be picked up by whatever unit reaches it first. (Exception: see 6.52.) Retreating units may carry the Jewel with them.

8.4 *Number of Jewels per Game.* No more than three Jewels are used in the suggested scenarios. After three Jewels have been found, no further search attempts are permitted; the remaining Miasma dissipates at the end of that turn and plays no role in the rest of the game.



9.0 Scenarios

9.1 *Standard Scenario.* New players should start with this scenario. Each player takes 50 units (17 zombies, 8 skeletons, and 25 wraiths), plus one Necromancer, who must begin the game at the marked location on the map (N hex). The combat units are deployed secretly (use a screen) within a 3-hex radius of the owning Necromancer, obeying stacking restrictions. Each player also receives 150 Conversion Points (CP) to be used as desired during the game. Toss a coin to see who moves first. The object of the scenario is to eliminate the enemy Necromancer.

9.2 *Conversion Scenario.* The Red Necromancer gets 27 zombies, 13 skeletons, and 40 wraiths. The Black Necromancer gets 7 zombies, 3 skeletons, 10 wraiths, and 400 CP. Black sets up anywhere on the large level 4 plateau. Red sets up anywhere as long as none of his units are within 13 hexes of any Black unit. The Miasma is in the central (3,4) hex. Red moves first. The Red player may make no conversions during the scenario, but the Black player may make *three* conversion attempts every turn, regardless of the number of units he controls. Exception: The Red player may make one or two conversions if he secures a Jewel which allows them. All other rules hold. Remember, enemy units stacking with or adjacent to an enemy Necromancer may *not* be converted; see Section 5.4. Object is as in the standard scenario.

10.0 Optional Rules

After becoming familiar with *Necromancer*, players may wish to "liven things up" by adding one or more of these rules to their scenarios. Counters are provided for all optional creatures and items.

10.1 *Conversion Point Allowance.* Each player starts with 50 CPs and gets 10 more CPs at the beginning of each friendly conversion phase, to be used or accumulated from turn to turn.

10.2 *Miasma Movement.* At the beginning of the game the Miasma is moved one hex in a direction determined by die roll. Roll one die and consult the compass directions in the SW corner of the map. Move all seven segments of the Miasma in the numbered direction determined by the roll. The Miasma will continue to move in that direction, one hex per player-turn, until a Jewel of Power is found or it reaches a map-edge. When either or both of these events occur, roll one die for a new direction at the beginning of the next turn. The Miasma will never move off the map edge. It retains its "shape" as it moves.

Disregard terrain when moving the Miasma; being magical, it can move over a cliff easily. However, units searching *within* the Miasma must still observe terrain restrictions.

10.3 *Miasma Teleport.* When a Jewel is found, at the beginning of the next turn a die is rolled and the Miasma "teleports" to the new double-spiral symbol indicated by the die roll. If the roll indicates the same set of hexes that the Miasma currently occupies, nothing happens.

10.4 *Miasma Demon.* One of the Miasma counters has a monster silhouette portrayed on the back. When this rule is employed, the Miasma counters are mixed and placed on the map with the spiral upward, so that the monster counter's position is unknown. When units successfully search a Miasma hex (after rolling to see whether a Jewel has been found) the Miasma counter in the searched hex is turned over. If it is blank, nothing happens and the counter is removed after the usual automatic conversion attempt. But if the monster silhouette appears, the wizards' searches have unleashed the hideous "Miasma demon," which is enormously powerful and very bad-tempered. The demon has a constant combat strength of *30*; it will *immediately* attack the units that unleashed it, and in the combat phase of every subsequent turn (until it is destroyed) it will move *onto* the hex occupied by the nearest unit(s) in the Miasma and attack it. (If more than one stack of units is equally near, roll a die to determine which is attacked.) The demon attacks before any of the player's units can. If the demon gains control of a Jewel by eliminating the units carrying it, it will carry the Jewel with it during future moves (and when it is destroyed, the Jewel is lost in the mist). The demon exerts no ZOC, but it can magically teleport across gaps in the mist to attack units in *any* Miasma hex. The demon *can* be destroyed by combat, and vanishes when the Miasma does.

10.5 *Extra Magic Items and Units.* It is possible that the opposing Necromancers might have had more time to prepare, allowing them to search for allies. It is also possible that they might have had significant magical items already. To use this option, allow each player to choose one (or more) items from the list below. Players should take the same number of items unless a handicap is deliberately being allowed. No player may pick more special units than there are counters available (i.e., no Necromancer may have more than four apprentices). If the *total* chosen by both players exceeds the available counters of some type, divide the available counters equally (but if one player chose fewer than half of the available counters, the other player gets the extras). Then the player(s) who did not get all their chosen units may choose again from the remaining counters only. (Example: If Red took all four apprentices as his first choice and Black took none, then Black could get no apprentices as second choices, because they were taken already.)

10.51 *Extra Jewel.* Select any one Jewel of Power from Section 8.2. It begins the game in the hands of the Necromancer, so it cannot be captured, and the Necromancer starts the game with the Jewel's ability.

10.52 *Apprentice.* The Necromancer has an apprentice to assist him. The Apprentice cannot convert units. However, neither can he *be* converted, and any unit stacked with him is immune to conversion (units directly adjacent to him may be converted). The Apprentice attacks directly with the strength of one zombie, and indirectly with the strength of one skeleton. He can carry a Jewel, but cannot determine what its power is. His MA and defense strength are the same as the Necromancer's. He has 3 search points.

10.53 *Mercenaries.* The Necromancer has two units of human mercenaries. Each mercenary unit has a strength of 8 and a boulder defense of 8; it may attack indirectly at a strength of 5, and may not be converted. It has a movement allowance of 4 and 2 search points. Mercenaries may not stack with any units except the Necromancer and his apprentice. They may carry (but not use) magical items.

10.54 *Dragon.* The Necromancer has made a pact with a small dragon, which will carry him and fight for him. The dragon counts as one unit for stacking; it attacks directly (only) with a strength of 20, and has a boulder defense of 10. It may cross cliff hexsides as though it were a wraith, and may carry the Necromancer or his apprentice (but not both) while doing so. It has a movement allowance of 5. It may not search for or carry a Jewel when it is by itself. It has a "conversion resistance" of 20. If "converted," it does not change sides; it simply flies away entirely. The dragon counts as *two* items from this list – it cannot be chosen if players agree to take one item each.

10.55 *Ring of Flying.* Allows Necromancer (or his apprentice, whoever is wearing it) to cross cliff hexsides as though he were a wraith. If the Apprentice is killed while wearing the ring, it may be captured by any unit that can carry a Jewel.

10.56 *Crystal Ball.* Carried by the Necromancer (no counter needed). It allows him to add 2 SP to *any* search his side makes, whether or not the Necromancer is there personally.

10.57 *Magic Sword.* Can be carried by either the Necromancer or his apprentice; can be captured if the apprentice is killed. Adds 6 to direct-attack combat value of its user.

10.58 *Magic Bow.* As above, but adds 4 to both direct- and indirect-attack combat value of its user.

NECROMANCER

Charts & Tables

Search Table

Cross-reference the number of hexes in the Miasma with the number of search points in the hex. Roll the indicated number (or higher) to successfully search.

Number of Miasma hexes left on map	*Number of search points per hex* 1-3	4-6	7-9	10+
1	7	6	5	3
2	8	7	6	4
3	9	8	6	5
4	10	9	7	6
5	10	10	8	6
6	11	10	9	7
7	12	11	10	8

Combat Results Table

	Odds 1-3	1-2	1-1	2-1	3-1	4-1
2	AR-2	AR-1	AR-1	NE	DR	DR
3	AR-2	AR	AR	DR	DR	DR-1
4	AR-1	AR	NE	DR	DR	DR-1
5	AR	NE	NE	DR	DR-1	DR-2
6	AR	NE	NE	DR	DR-1	DR-2
7	AR	NE	DR	DR-1	DR-2	DE
8	NE	NE	DR	DR-1	DR-2	DE
9	NE	DR	DR-1	DR-2	DE	DE
10	NE	DR	DR-1	DR-2	DE	DE
11	NE	DR-1	DR-1	DE	DE	DE
12	DR	DR-1	DR-2	DE	DE	DE

NE No Effect
AR Attacker Retreats
DR Defender Retreats
-1 1 unit lost per hex by retreating side
-2 2 units lost per hex by retreating side
AE Attacker Eliminated
DE Defender Eliminated

Worse than 1-3: Automatic AE
5-1 or better: Automatic DE

Conversion Table

Die Roll	*Conversion Odds* x1	x2	x3	x4
1	–	–	–	C
2	–	–	C	C
3	–	–	C	C
4	–	C	C	C
5	–	C	C	C
6	C	C	C	E

– No effect. CPs are not expended.
C Converted. CPs are expended.
E Eliminated. CPs are expended.

Fixed Unit Abilities

	Search Points	Movement Allowance	Combat Strengths: direct/indirect/boulder def.
Necromancer	6	2	*
Zombie	1	3	*
Skeleton	2	4	*
Wraith	3	5	*
Mercenary	2	4	8/5/8
Apprentice	3	2	*
Dragon	0	5	20/0/10
Crystal ball	+2 to any search made by owning player		–

*Variable; see Conversion Track

Jewel Table

(See 8.2 for explanations)

Roll two dice:

2 Two free "x3" conversion attempts
3 One free "x3" conversion attempt
4 Necromancer +1 MP
5 Skeleton units +1 combat strength (each)
6 20 CP
7 20 CP
8 20 CP
9 Zombies +1 MP
10 Wraith additional movement phase (one hex after combat)
11 One free "x3" conversion attempt
12 Necromancer strength *halved*

Conversion Track (Variable Unit Abilities)

		Total number of units controlled by Necromancer 1-16	17-25	26-34	35-44	45-54	55-60	61-65	66-70	71-76	77+
Unit strength and resistance	Z	12-10	11-9	10-9	10-8	8-8	7-7	6-6	5-5	4-5	3-4
	S	8-8	8-7	7-7	7-6	6-6	5-5	4-4	3-3	3-3	2-3
	W	5-4	4-3	3-3	3-3	3-2	2-2	2-2	2-1	2-1	1-1
Defense factor against boulder attacks*		12		11		10		9		8	
Conversion attempts allowed per turn		two		one						none	

Z = Zombie unit
S = Skeleton unit
W = Wraith unit
*This number is also the Necromancer's defense strength against *all* attacks.
Note: Do not include Necromancers, apprentices, mercenaries, or dragons when counting units!

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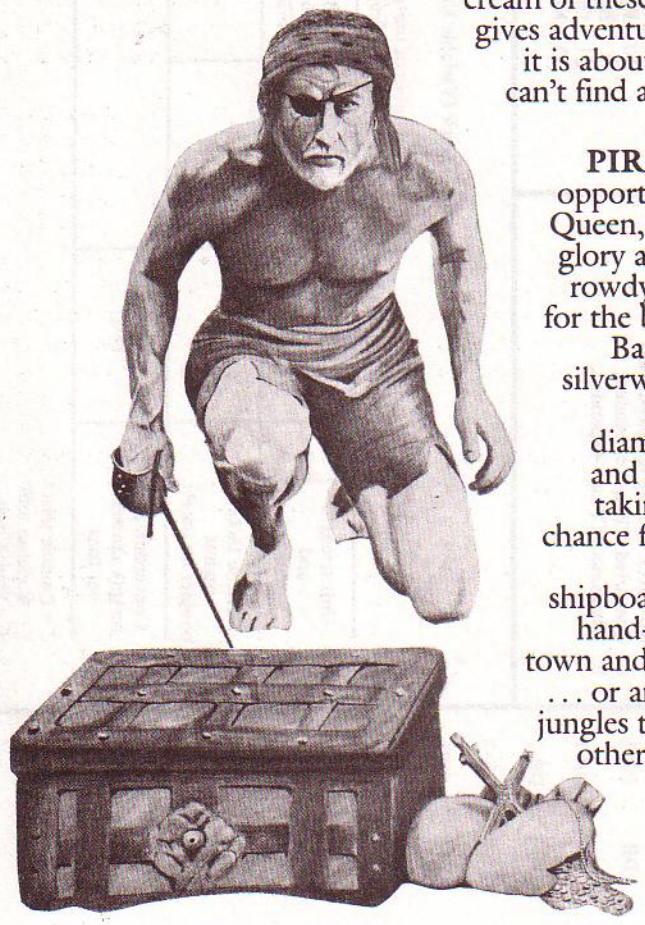

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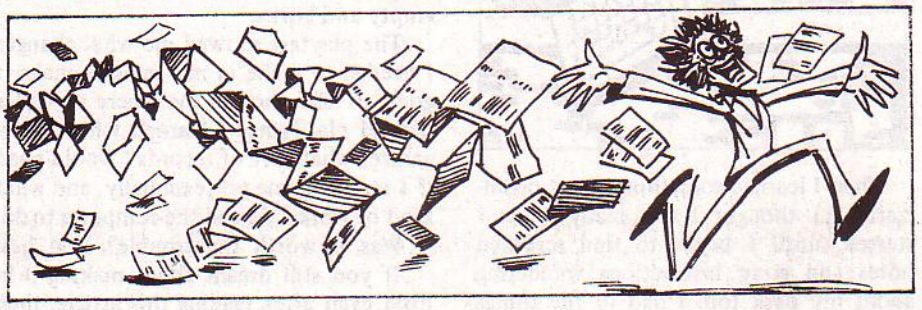
Playtesting Your PBM



by W.G. Armintrout

E. Gary Gygax started out with nothing more than $1,000 and a dream.

Doesn't that make your blood surge? "Only $1,000?" you say, glancing into your bankbook. "Why, even I have $1,000! Maybe I can do it, too!" The brain fills with visions of krugerrands piled high, your stock rising in value on Wall Street, and – oh joy! oh bliss! – spending all of your working day with games!

Now, I don't want to rain on anyone's parade, but making it big in the game industry is not exactly simple. In Gygax's case, hard work – and a minor miracle known as ***Dungeons & Dragons*** – paid off. Just because he's made millions doesn't mean that you can scrape up a few bucks, launch yourself into business, and come up smelling roses.

Look at the PBM field. Right now, play-by-mail is hot with fledgling businessmen itching to make their first million. And look what's happening:

Failure – Remember *Lords of Valetia*? Or Buchanan's ***Star Cluster One***? Every year, significant numbers of game companies go belly-up, sometimes in their first weeks of operation.

Fudging – It isn't the sort of thing I can prove, but I bet that for every company that goes out of business there's another that's getting by with fudging. That is, they went into business without being ready – and now they can get by only by making up rules as they go, moderating by guess and intuition, pretending to run a game that exists only in their original good intentions.

How many companies fail, and how many cheat? There's no way to say. Out there right now, I'm willing to say, there's more than one businessman whose Great American Dream of PBMing to Easy Street has been replaced by the continuing nightmare of pretending to run an honest game.

Even so, you *still* want to try out the PBM business? I admire your spunk. Not being a businessman by profession, I won't pretend to advise you on technical details of running a business. What I do know something about is games.

If you want to make it in the PBM business, there is only one place to start: *The Playtest.*

A playtest, when we're talking about play-by-mail games, is a "dry run" of the game you hope to run commercially some day. Why do it? Two excellent reasons: First, you'll find out whether your game is any good or not. Second, you'll get a taste of the PBM business without risking your neck.

A playtest goes something like this:

Prepare Your Game. Write the rules down, organize them, run off a few rulebooks, and design the computer programs (if any). Prepare the game just as if you were about to run it "for real" – try to nail down every loose nook and cranny. No matter how hard you try, you will find some hole left uncovered by the time the playtest is over (and you may even discover that the game is flawed beyond recovery).

The problem most newcomers make involves overestimating their own skills. They think they can run a game based on a pile of scribbled notes. They are too busy to organize the rules, covering all of their bases. They think that designing the game will be the easy part, a real snap . . . and they're wrong. I *know.* I've designed some terrible clunkers myself (none of them ever published, thank goodness!).

Recruit Playtesters. You need a group small enough so that it won't break your budget to test the game, but large enough so that you learn something. Try at least twenty people, or four separate game sessions, depending on the type of game we're talking about.

The common mistake is to recruit the wrong kind of people: close friends, hometown folks, relatives – polite, gentle people who never open their mouths and make complaints. I'm sorry, but you won't learn anything from people like that. You need pompous, egotistical gamers – highly-opinionated, tough-minded – who make barbed remarks. You want people from out of town who have to talk with other players by letter or long-distance telephone. You especially want people who will play the game because they like games, rather than somebody who will try out your game just to be polite or as a personal favor.

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any other PBM games you're in. If you're playing ***The Tribes of Crane***, for instance, ask your fellow players if they'd like to try out your PBM game. Then ask them to spread the word to other PBMers in *their* other games. You can pick up a lot of people that way, over time. Next, pick up any of the APA fanzines like *Alarums and Excursions* that run the addresses of contributors, and send them an invite. If you've got a fantasy game, that will pick up two out of every three you ask. As a last resort, try a Reader Ad in one of the magazines – *but* be sure and mention that it's a playtest.

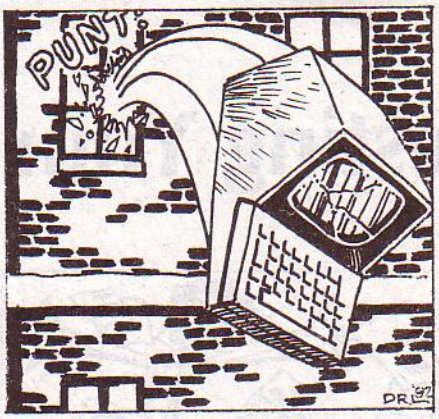
Question: Should you charge the playtesters for playing in your game? I'm of two minds. On one hand, they are earning their own way by testing your game and giving you their evaluations. You might even say that you should be paying them! Practically speaking, however, you tend to get better playtesters if you charge some nominal fee (say, $1/turn) – people appreciate what they pay for, and they'll get their turns in on time and won't drop out as often (though it makes recruiting somewhat tougher).

Start the Test. This is self-explanatory. Just run the game as you would if you were actually doing it for profit. Keep on schedule. Take notes on problems that crop up. Before you start, decide (and let the players know) how long you intend to run it: a specific number of turns? until a specific date? or just until you're satisfied? Some folks, to encourage their playtesters to play a good game, promise them that they may continue their positions or characters if/when the game goes commercial. If you aren't sure how long to run the game, go for a long game. You can't go wrong with a long playtest, but you can foul up by cutting off a playtest too soon.

All of this about playtesting comes from my own experience. Not too terribly long ago I had the idea that I was going to start a second income by starting my own PBM business (better that than Amway!). My game was of the same genre as a lot of current PBMs – a fantasy role-playing game run by mail. The whole thing looked easy. After all, I was an accomplished game designer with two published games under my belt. Besides that, my college background lay in computer design and programming.

Fortunately, I tried a playtest first.

The first thing I learned was just how much time it really took to fold the turns, stick them in envelopes, address them, and run them to the post office. Things that don't take "any" time start to mount up when you are stuffing thirty envelopes instead of just one or two.



Then I learned something about organization. I thought I was ready when I started, until I began to find scrawled notes and stray instructions wandering about my desk top. I had to file things like address changes, character instructions (both immediate and standing orders), file each player's account, track deadlines, update the dungeons as they passed through, watch for drop-outs and replace them with new blood . . . it took a lot of work.

I was lucky in that the game worked well and needed no major changes. The main difficulties involved writing some passages more clearly for those who didn't understand the first-edition rules. My *big* problem was understanding the complications of a multi-party dungeon. More than one group of adventurers ran through the same dungeon at the same time, and too many times one group would accidentally follow (without realizing it) in the path of another group. Thus, the leading group would clean out the dungeon, and the follow-up group would keep wondering why everything was so empty and boring!

The playtest showed me what changes I needed to make in my game to make it good. It also showed me where my rules needed clarifying. I learned what to organize, what sort of records I would need if I ran the game professionally, and what kind of work I'd need the computer to do.

Was it worth the trouble? You bet.

If you still dream about making it in PBM even after reading this article, then I plead with you to start out with a playtest. Please! You'll learn something about what running PBM is like without risking your life's savings. When you've finished, you'll have some real experience on which to decide whether to try PBMing professionally.

Come to think of it, perhaps some of the major PBM companies ought to look into playtesting, too. Maybe we could cut down on half-baked games and rulebooks that need revising two months after they've been published!

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Contest Results: Magic in Car Wars

The "Magic in Car Wars" contest (TSG 51) was our most popular one to date; I didn't weigh the file of entries, but it certainly came in at several pounds. Wading through all that was an enjoyable experience, all the same, punctuated by howls of glee and stifled giggles. I don't know how much of the contest's popularity was due to the subject matter, and how much came from the increased prizes. (Ask me if I care . . .)

We received literally dozens of "pothole," "wall," and "gremlin" spells. Not a bad idea, but too ordinary for a prize. If you want them, make up your own. Following is the really strange stuff, plus the obvious-sounding ones that weren't heavily duplicated.

The winner is Tom Gordon, of Rosehead, CA; he gets a $50 certificate. His truly maniacal entry:

Tornado (or, "Toto, this doesn't look like Kansas!"). Automatic; costs 12 points. This spell allows the casting player to take one hard blow at the playing surface, directly atop the counter representing the wizard who cast the spell. This introduces a colossal tornado into play. The wizard's counter will not move (it's in the eye of the storm) – but all other counters are likely to move considerably.

After the tornado passes, all mines, spikes, and debris counters are removed from play entirely (they have been blown away). Any right-side-up pedestrian counter is unharmed. Any inverted pedestrian counter takes 1d6 damage. Any right-side-up vehicle counter is unharmed, but retains its old speed in its new location (which may lead to problems, especially if it is atop a building). Any upside-down vehicle counter is assumed to have been flipped over; it "rams the ground," taking damage to its roof, at whatever its speed was before the tornado. Any counters that have been knocked entirely off the board have been swept up by the tornado and carried to Oz. Any disarranged road sections are replaced as they were before.

Second place (a $20 certificate) goes to Gary E. Reilly of Rochester, NY. Gary sent a huge batch of malevolent motorist's magic, including several really good ones, to wit:

Faerie-fire Headlights. Automatic, costs 2 points. An excellent defense in night encounters, this spell conjures a pair of lights between you and your attackers. These lights, which appear to be the headlights of an oncoming vehicle, are under your control and cannot be detected for what they really are until they are within 100 feet of an observer. (They cannot get more than 500 feet from you.) The lights inflict no damage in themselves, but will certainly distract your foe.

Highway of Glass. Automatic; costs 7 points. Creates a single-lane road surface made from clear crystal. This road extends for some 30 feet before and behind the caster's car, and moves along with it. An excellent way to cross washed-out bridges, road construction areas, debris-littered road, or even open country. Once created, it lasts for 15 minutes. (Note that if the Highway of Glass is used to cross debris or mines, it does not "sweep" them away; it has no effect on the terrain or objects is passes. It cannot be used to cross terrain higher than a curb, obstacle, or regular open country, and under no circumstances will it allow travel through solid walls, trees, etc.)

Wizard's Reverse. Automatic on your own vehicle, weapon (base roll to hit 9) against other vehicles; costs 5 points. The target of this spell (vehicles only) is instantly turned around, keeping the same speed. It is a D2 hazard to that vehicle, due to disorientation – or D4 if the driver of the vehicle did not expect it. (An almost identical spell came from Theodore Miller on the same day.)

Hold Steering. Weapon; costs 3 points. Base roll to hit is 8. Range: 100 feet. If successful, this spell locks your opponent's steering mechanism solidly in place for 1-6 seconds. A lot of fun on curves. Can be cured by a Demon Mechanic, who will rip out the enchanted system and instantly replace it.

Harry's Hook. Weapon; costs 8 points. Base roll to hit is 8. Range: 50 feet. Creates a length of magical chain. One end is secured to a stationary object (lamp post, bridge abutment, etc. . . . if none exists, one will be provided). The other end culminates in a large, heavy-duty hook which grabs the target car. One second after the spell hits, the chain will pull tight, doing damage (see below). However, if the target vehicle can stop within that second (10 phases), a driver or passenger can leave the car, remove the hook, and return to the car. It takes one second at the rear of the car to unhook the Hook.

If the hook pulls tight, it will yank something off the car. Roll 1 die:

1. One rear wheel is gone – roll again to determine which one.
2. One rear weapon is gone – roll again to determine which one.
3. You got off lucky. 1d6 points of armor are peeled off.
4. Not so lucky. 3d6 points of armor go away.
5. Your car is solidly built. Decelerate by 20 mph and take 1 point of whiplash injury to every occupant, but nothing else happens.
6. Decelerate by 10 mph – and then something comes off anyhow. Roll again until you get a result from 1 to 4 and take that damage as well. However, nobody is whiplashed.

Note also that results 1 and 2 produce obstacles on the road; 3 and 4 produce debris.

Extremely honorable mentions go to the creators of the following spells, which were in serious contention for the top spots:

Branch to Bug: Move and Lose Record. Weapon; costs 1 point. Base roll to hit is 7. Any one targeting computer in the target vehicle will immediately perform the MLR opcode, causing it (the computer, not the vehicle) to crash. It takes the autoboot mechanism three full seconds (30 phases) to reboot the system.

Branch to Bug: Seek Track and Scratch. Weapon; costs 3 points. Base roll to hit is 8. Any one computer in the target vehicle will perform the STS opcode; the computer crashes totally and stays down until it can be repaired. Repair takes four hours and costs 25% of the computer's original cost.

Branch to Bug: Halt and Catch Fire. Weapon; costs 5 points. Base roll to hit is 8. Any one computer in the target vehicle will perform the HCF opcode. The computer crashes instantly and is a total loss. There is a 50% chance that it will merely smoulder annoyingly; otherwise, it bursts into B-movie type flames and must be treated as a FT-induced fire.

Create Distracting Illusion. Automatic; costs one point. This spell creates an illusion of the wizard or his vehicle performing some bizarre behavior (i.e., the wizard sticks both legs out the window and removes his kneecaps). This breaks the concentration of anyone targeting him or his vehicle, causing them to hold fire for the remainder of that turn.

—Eric Lund, Santa Monica, CA

Summon Demon Cyclist. Automatic; costs 4 points; plus one more for each turn past the third. This spell conjures a demon on a flaming motorcycle, who will obey the summoning wizard and attack any vehicle on command.

Maybe.

Unfortunately, this fiend has been conjured against his will. To control him, the summoner must roll his current spell points (after the cost of summoning) on two dice. A roll of his current spell points or less will insure control. Rolling any number over the summoner's current spell points means the cyclist escapes control and attacks the nearest vehicle. The cyclist will always attack the vehicle closest to him at the beginning of the turn unless that vehicle has already crashed or lost its driver.

The demon cyclist rides a standard Outlander without a sidecar. However, it has HC 5 and never runs out of ammo. The demon's leather jacket and jeans count as 4 points of body armor; the demon's own body can take 4 hits. The demon can also throw flame from his hand; treat this as a flamethrower with unlimited ammo. His arc of fire includes front, left, and right, but not rear.

In an arena, the demon will appear through a randomly-selected gate at 75 mph. On the road, he will appear 90 feet behind the wizard's vehicle, moving 60 mph, or 20 mph faster than the wizard (whichever is faster). If the spell lapses, the demon will disappear in a puff of smoke; if the demon is killed, he and his cycle will be consumed by flames instantly.

—Daniel Bostaph, Hixon, IN

Feared Spell No. 13. Weapon; costs 11 points. Base roll to hit is 8. Turns any one *vehicle* into a frog. The frog's new speed is zero. Occupants of the car are not affected by the spell, but are considered to have jumped out of the car, and may therefore be severely injured by the fall. If they survive, though, their gear will be intact. The car will regain its original form (undamaged) after 24 hours.

Note: This spell is known to be held by only one legendary wizard, Morgorath of Parma, Ohio, who was an early teacher of ***Car Wars*** magic and kept this one to himself.

—Ron Shigeta, Salem, OR

And still more honorable mentions:

Wrong Button. Weapon; costs 3 points. Cannot overshoot or hit a pedestrian; base roll to hit is 6. If spell hits, roll 1d6 for effect:

1. Driver of target vehicle accidentally steps on brake for 30 mph deceleration next turn.
2. Driver makes hard swerve right/left (roll again for which) on his next phase.
3. Driver floors accelerator for maximum acceleration next turn.
4. Driver or gunner fires one randomly chosen mounted weapon immediately (choose only from among those that have not fired that turn).
5. As above, but choose from dropped weapons or oil/paint sprays.
6. Driver retracts pop-up turret or wheelguards (roll randomly if vehicle happens to have both systems).

If the vehicle has no weapon or person eligible to fire on the turn the spell hits, and a 4 or 5 is rolled, the spell takes effect at the beginning of next turn. If a number is rolled corresponding to a system the car does not have at all, the spell is wasted.

—Ronald Pehr, Las Vegas, NV

Tired Tire. Weapon; costs 3 points. Base roll is 7. Any one tire on subject vehicle immediately deflates. Treat as a blowout for game purposes; for campaign purposes, the tire is undamaged and can be reinflated by an air pump. Does not work on solid tires.

Body Builder. Automatic; costs 3 points. When cast on any person, improves physical strength; doubles running movement, throwing distance, and hit points for the next 10 seconds. However, if the subject has taken more than 3 body hits when the spell runs out, he dies.

—Marilyn Pehr, Las Vegas, NV

Summon Backseat Driver. Special; comes in two versions. If a wizard knows the spell, he can use it either way. As an automatic spell, it creates a normal human driver with "6" reflexes and body armor, who will take control of the wizard's vehicle and follow his commands. The wizard does not have to stay in the vehicle to control the driver, but must be adjacent to the driver when he summons him. Cost is 2 for the summoning, plus 1 per turn continued.

As a weapon spell, it costs 8 points and lasts 1d6 turns, with a base roll to hit of 7. If it succeeds, the backseat driver will appear in the target vehicle and attempt to take control. Roll one die each turn he remains; on a 1 through 4, the backseat driver has taken control of the target, which means the wizard controls the vehicle for that turn. The other occupants of a car may attack the backseat driver with their hand weapons (remember, they are at point-blank range). The driver is unarmed.

Whichever way the spell is used, it does not matter whether there is a space for the backseat driver to appear in. He comes with his own seat, which will magically fit into the car, and vanish when he does.

—Barry Link, Kelowna, BC, Canada

Summon Cosell. Automatic; costs 4 points to cast, plus more if needed to sustain interest (see below). This spell summons a helicopter inhabited by the most popular (?!) sportscaster in the country, doing a special on *you.* While he is present, all prestige points scored (positive and negative) count double. The spell lasts until four full turns go by without combat. If four turns go by, you may spend one spell point per turn to keep the helicopter overhead until combat starts again (which gives you another free four seconds, and so on). Only one car or team (referee decides what constitutes a team)

may be in the limelight; other teams score normally.

—Aaron Burns

Comic Relief. Weapon; costs 5 points. This spell causes all weapons fired by the target vehicle for 1d6 turns to malfunction magically. Instead of their usual effect, regular weapons will emit small puffs of smoke and flags saying "Bang," "Zap," "Foosh," etc., depending on the weapon. Mine- and spikedroppers emit harmless cream pies. Smoke and paint sprays emit laughing gas (does not block view in any way, but causes a D1 hazard when driven through due to giggling). Hand weapons in the vehicle are similarly affected (grenades throw confetti when they go off, even if they were set for the full 5 seconds).

—Russel de Castongrene, Idaho Falls, ID

Speed. Automatic; costs 3 points. Allows wizard's vehicle up to 30 mph automatic acceleration or deceleration, with no ill effects. Takes effect during normal acceleration phase at beginning of turn.

—Mike Gilbert, S. Portland, ME

Glide. Automatic; costs 2 points. Lifts wizard's vehicle just enough to pass over oil, mines, spikes, debris, or obstacles (but nothing larger). Effect lasts until the end of the turn. Maneuvers may be accomplished normally while gliding.

—Jim Norman, Austin, TX

Summon Game Designer. Automatic; costs 6 points. This spell instantly teleports a babbling (or drooling, flip a coin) game designer within range of the wizard's guns. In exchange for his life, he will grant one *minor* rule change, which will last only five turns. If the referee feels that the requested change is too great, the game designer will cause the wizard's vehicle to explode immediately.

—Richard Wolfe, Jr., Fort Worth, TX

Motion Sickness. Weapon; costs 1 point. Roll to hit is twice the driver's reflex roll. Victim suffers from motion sickness for the next 1d6 turns, lowering HC of his car by 2.

—Rob Kirk, Austin, TX

Summon Air Elemental. Automatic; costs 4 points. Creates a small whirlwind controlled by the wizard, which lasts for 2d6 seconds. Its speed is 200 mph (2" per phase!). Any mine, spike, debris, obstacle, or *pedestrian* counter crossed by the air elemental is lifted high in the air and dropped – that is, removed from play. If the elemental crosses a vehicle counter, it causes a D3 hazard for cycles, D2 for compacts and subcompacts, and D1 for others. The elemental is a motorcycle-sized target (make up a ½" square counter) and will vanish if it takes 20 points of damage from any weapons. Hand weapons do full damage against it.

—R. Ostorero, Sacramento, CA

Attract Missiles. Weapon; 2 points to cast, plus 1 for each turn maintained. Base roll to hit is 8. Any shot or missile spell aimed at the affected person or vehicle gets a +2 "to hit" modifier.

Summon Ogre. Semi-automatic; costs 12 points. Roll one die when this spell is cast. On any result but a 1, the points are wasted. On a 1, an Ogre appears! Roll again; on a result of 1-4, the Ogre uses its AP guns (12 sets of linked MGs) as the wizard directs for that turn and the following one; it then vanishes. (If you want an Ogre counter, make it 50 feet long and 20 feet wide, appearing anywhere on the board except atop a vehicle or pedestrian.) On a roll of 5, the Ogre uses a tacnuke, and everything on the map goes up in a fireball. On a 6, not only does the Ogre nuke the place out, but it doesn't vanish afterward. If you're playing a campaign game, the first thing your new characters can do is figure out how to get rid of it. (Referees – assume the Ogre is very low on ammo, armor breached heavily, etc., to give the players a chance.)

—Phil Rennert, Houston, TX

Summon Punks. Automatic; costs 8 points. This spell summons eight teenaged demons in leather jackets, who will immediately remove the wheels from any vehicle within 50 feet of the caster, as long as it is going below 30 mph. They will then vanish, never to be seen again. Effect on victimized vehicles is identical to having all wheels shot off at once.

—Patrick O. Dick, Wadsworth, OH

Air Bag. Weapon; costs 9 points. Base roll to hit is 7; target must be within 12". This spell causes an old kind of "safety" device to appear and activate in the target vehicle. Target may perform *no* actions, except fire weapons on automatic, for the next two turns. It also undergoes a D1 hazard for every full 10 mph over 30 that it is travelling (i.e., D2 for 50 mph, D3 for 60, etc.)

Ejection Seat. Automatic; 2 points. This spell causes the caster to be propelled from his vehicle into the air. He will land safely at the beginning of the next turn, anywhere within 2" of the takeoff point. He may not do anything else while flying through the air, and may not be attacked while flying.

—Kenneth A. Megill, Newark, DE

Pillow Stop. Automatic; costs 4 points. Instantly stops wizard's vehicle completely and safely.

—Ken Baumbach, San Diego, CA

CONTEST

We received a number of entries that didn't exactly fit the contest . . . they weren't magical spells at all, but magic *items.* Did we mind? No. Did we like them? Yes. Did we print any of them? No. The reason: We're giving you a chance to come up with your own. Since so many of you like magic *spells,* send us some *items* to go with them. (We're keeping the already-submitted items on hand, and will treat them as entries in the new contest.)

As before, entries will be judged subjectively; the funnier and more original they are, the better. In the event of duplicated ideas, the best treatment is more important than the date of postmark.

The description of each item should include its name, its function in game terms, its availability (common, rare, or unique) and its price when available (use a cost scale compatible with that of ***Car Wars***). If an item requires "charges" of some sort, describe them. Another appropriate entry would be the description of a process used to enchant an *existing* object or vehicle to make it magical. Note that if you give (for instance) a ridiculous price, you may still win, but the best entries are those that we think are most logically worked out. We will rewrite and juggle numbers as necessary to make all printed entries playable.

All entries will become the property of SJ Games. The winner will receive a certificate good for $50 of our products; the runner-up will earn a $20 certificate. Honorable mentions will be printed in TSG, as space allows. As always, we reserve the right to award fewer or no prizes if we don't like any of the entries.

All entries must be postmarked by October 15th.

Utility Programs for PBM Gamers

Deus Ex Machina
by A.D. Young

Serious PBM space gamers are confronted with a number of aspects of play where the abilities of a computer could profitably be employed. Major areas where a computer is useful include the keeping of systematic game records, diplomacy, and mapping. Other valuable (but more specialized) uses may include the statistical analysis of results (e.g., *StarWeb*) or the actual computation of play each turn in such games as *Empyrean Challenge* and *Zorphwar.*

Programs in these areas have been developed, or are in the process of being written, by various players. The purpose of this series of articles is to describe the variety and function of these utility PBM programs and to encourage their wider use. It is clear that there will be many further developments in this field.

GamePlayer List (4.2)

PBM gamers who play many games, particularly of the multiplayer type, are apt to meet a large number of opponents. Games such as *StarWeb, StarMaster, Starlord,* EC, or UII/III involve contact with a wide variety of players from all over the world. It is useful to have an insight into their strengths and weaknesses so that they may be dealt with effectively. It is often vital to be able to contact them promptly in order to clinch some diplomatic maneuver or trade deal before the opposition gets wind of it. Above all, the dynamics of play are greatly enhanced by having as thorough knowledge of an opponent as possible.

There is only one way to be in a position to take maximum effective action at any given time; that's by having all the relevant data ready. In practical terms, this means keeping personal records of all players previously met and games undertaken. The traditional method of doing this is with a card-index system. The limitation of such a system is that it can only retrieve information easily from the one category into which it was sorted, which is usually family names. Any other retrieval – such as country, game, or player assessment – involves a very tedious search through the index.

GPL is an Applesoft program I designed to manage the personal game records of the user. The records of multiple encounters with over 800 different gameplayers may be stored on a diskette in a file called Game Player Data. Each record is a minimum of 120 bytes in length and contains the name, address, country, phone number, game details, and assessment of an individual gameplayer. This information may be retrieved in a variety of ways which are of use to a gamer.

Main Menu

The number of records currently held is displayed together with a Printer On/Off indicator. There are nine functions available:

1. *Search.* The search menu contains five functions. You may search by Name, Country, Game Details, or Assessment. The complete record is retrieved in each case. In addition, there is a Search Update function.

Name may be searched for by left justified character string, any character string, or family name (2-3 sec). All such strings or family names are found. Country and Game Details may be searched for by left justified character string or any character string. Assessment may be searched for those player encounters where ability is less than or greater than a specified amount, and for those where the sum of all attributes is less than or greater than a specified amount. Search Update resets the alphabetic search data used in the family name search so that it reflects the actual data held.

2. *List Records.* List records from A to B.

3. *New Record.* Results in the prompts:

NAME: john smith

The field is 25 bytes long and the search routine takes the right character string up to the first space as a family name. Names which do not contain at least one space will not be accepted.

ADDRESS: 45 walker st apt 42 lake grove ny 11755

The field is 46 bytes. A RETURN alone enters 'UNKNOWN' in the data.

COUNTRY: USA

The field is 12 bytes. A RETURN alone enters 'N/A' in the data.

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The field is 12 bytes. A RETURN alone enters 'N/A' in the data.

GAME:NAME:ALLY?: SW74 BECRUX A
The field is 15 bytes. Any details that the user desires may be placed here. For example, (UII xxxxZ PE) might mean that player xxxxZ in UII was a Piratical Enemy.

ASSESSMENT: 5555
The field is 4 bytes. The assessment assumed is ATRC where A = ability, T = trustworthiness, R = reliability, and C = communication on a scale of 0-9 with 5 average. Sum = A + T + R + C. This field may be filled in any way the user pleases but an Assessment search will assume ATRC.

4. *Edit Record.* Since the records are kept in strict alphabatical order, Name can only be edited by deletion and new entry. All other fields may have new data entered or be ignored.

5. *Delete a Record or Multiple.* Any record may be deleted, but if it contains multiple game details, the option of deleting any of these separately is also given.

6. *Printer ON/OFF.* The normal mode is printer OFF. When the printer is turned ON, a further option of printing the complete game record or only name, address, and telephone number is available. Printing will occur with both the search and list functions.

7. *Multiple Records.* When a player has been encountered more than once, the only extra fields required are the Game Details and Assessment. Up to 12 such sets of data may be entered for each record. Alternatively, a number of multiples may be used for more extensive game details. Initially, a record is entered by 3 (New Record) and becomes an ordinary record. When extra game data is entered for that player only the GAME:NAME: ALLY? and ASSESSMENT prompts are used and the record is converted to a multiple record.

8. *Quit.* Closes the GamePlayer Data file, locks it, and returns to Applesoft.

9. *Family Name.* This is the most-used function of the main menu. It is the same as the path followed by the search function and menu but sets default parameters and asks for the search key immediately.

Family name is assumed to be the right justified character string up to the first space in the name field. The search is a pseudo-binary sort of a sample of the data held in memory. It aims to find a close approximation to the required record number and then ensures that all desired records are found. Whenever the number of records is eight or more, an update of the search data may be undertaken from the search routine. In any case, whenever the New Record or Family Name search routines are entered, the number of records is examined to determine whether the search data requires updating, which may then occur automatically.

The value of such a utility as GPL lies in its ability to retrieve specific game data rapidly. There are many and varied uses, but perhaps one specific example will suffice. In a recent ***StarWeb*** game, I met and had extensive dealings with a player who insisted upon signing his name only as John with no address or other details given. The postcards he sent came from Florida and it was clear from his comments that we had met previously. GPL had no trouble in procuring a list of Johns and then all that was required was to establish which John from Florida was my bird.

GamePlayer List (4.2) is an invaluable utility for the serious PBM gamer. In a game where good intelligence is vital, it enables the user to stay at least one jump ahead of opponents. The program is, of course, useful for any gaming activity, and could readily be adapted to other record-keeping uses.

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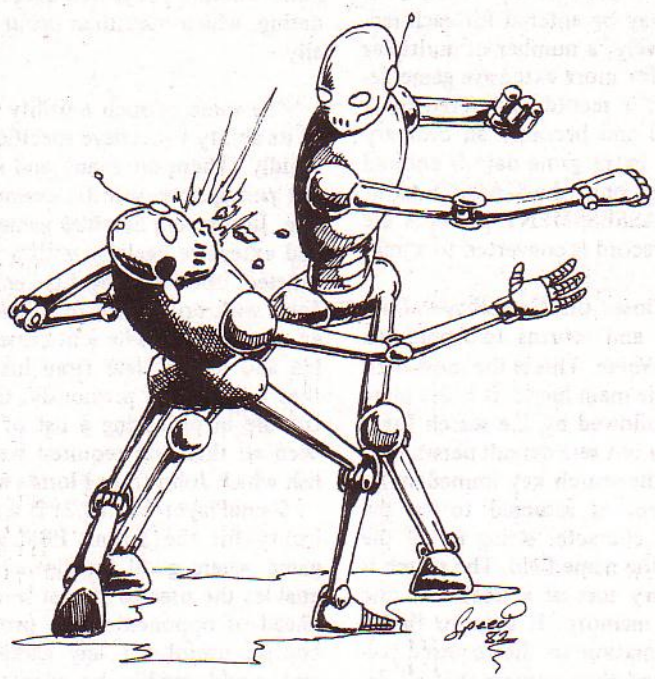

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Game items for which reviews have been assigned or received include ***Alma Mater, Catacombs of Chaos,*** Boxed ***Champions, Grav Ball, Heroic Fantasy,*** and ***The Traveller Book.***

★★★★★

DRAGONS OF UNDEREARTH (Metagaming); $7.99. Designed by Keith Gross. 30-page rulebook, 12" x 16" map, 70 counters, one die in a 6" x 8½" full-color box. Published 1982.

DRAGONS OF UNDEREARTH is a continuation of Metegaming's ***UnderEarth*** series. ***UnderEarth*** is a basic, summarized version of ***The Fantasy Trip,*** whose basic purpose is to make it easier for those who have nerver played an FRP game. The DRAGONS OF UNDEREARTH rules booklet consists of two separate 15-page modules. The first is Character Generation. It shows how to set up characters choosing attribute points, talents, spells, armor, magic items, fine weapons, etc. The Combat Module is made of three parts: Introductory combat rules and scenarios, intermediate combat rules and scenarios, and advanced combat rules and scenarios. It deals with both sword and magic use.

DRAGONS OF UNDEREARTH is fully compatible with TFT. It contains a few things that may interest some Fantasy Masters. It lists explosive gems and their cost. For those FMs using counters from TFT micros, the ones included in DoU are definitely worthwhile. DoU also includes a ranking system in which FMs or players can make scenarios evenly balanced.

However, this is basically just a summarized version of the three TFT booklets. DoU includes the complete talents table, but doesn't explain what they are (they're going to be explained in the next game of the series, ***Conquerers of UnderEarth***). In fact, CoU is referred to quite a few times. Since CoU isn't out yet, those who are in doubt will have to wait. While the counter and box art are excellent, they still don't justify the almost $8 price tag. DoU's components aren't much better than a decent Micro, which runs about $4. The other problem is that if you don't have the TFT booklets, you'll have to buy ***Conquerers of UnderEarth,*** too. If CoU has the same price tag, you'd be better off purchasing the three TFT rulebooks.

DRAGONS OF UNDEREARTH is a simple FRP game that anyone new to the gaming field can learn. For those of you just starting out, it's a worthwhile game (just ignore the price label on the cellophane). Anyone who already has TFT products would be advised to stay away from this one, unless you're into counters or have got money waiting to be spent.

–Paul Manz

FIELD GUIDE TO ENCOUNTERS (Judges Guild); $12. Designed by "Dragon's Byte." Two 8½" x 11" paperbound rulebooks. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

The front cover announces FIELD GUIDE TO ENCOUNTERS as "two huge volumes containing: rules and guidelines for this new role-playing system, 600 familiar and not-so-familiar monsters, provisions for godhood, and intelligent character monsters." Aside from this, the cover is not encouraging: cheap, typing-quality paper on which is printed the typical Judges Guild low-budget art. One colume sports tacky, hand-separated color; the other, with the same art, is black and white.

Inside, the hapless purchaser does find everything the cover claims. There are a few rules for a role-playing system. The second volume does consist almost entirely of monsters, familiar and not-so-familiar. There are some provisions for godhood and intelligent monsters. As for the claim "Good for hours of intriguing fun," well . . .

Despite the cover, which features a man-sized King Kong and the hand of a Kong-sized Fay Wray, the rules seem to indicate that FIELD GUIDE is a *fantasy* role-playing system. Yet this is the first FRPG to be released totally without a combat system *or* a magic system. Well, actually, it does have a "Manitou Combat" system for meeting your foes in "mental combat . . . on a slightly higher plane." Picture Conan laying aside his trusty sword to meet his enemy on a slightly higher plane. Not very exciting. The monster lists are equally disappointing. Monsters are described with a column of incomplete stats and a poor line-drawing – no text whatsoever. The "familiar" monsters include run-of-the-mill orcs and elves, while the

"not-so-familiar" monsters range from the coffee cup and animated cigarette to the Holy Water tinkler, which does exactly what the name implies. The provisions for godhood are sketchy and ill-defined, but seem to offer a character reaching 20th level a choice between near-certain death and a 5% shot at godhood, both of which remove the character from the mortal world. It is never clear in the rules if a player may choose a character of a non-human race, though the cover indicates that this is possible. The listing of intelligent monsters, presumably where non-human player-characters would be found, includes everything from dragons to housecats defined in human stats.

Experienced gamers should avoid this product. Intermediate gamers should avoid this product. Novice gamers should avoid this product. Paper recyclers should look into FIELD GUIDE very seriously.

–J. David George

FIELD OF HONOR (Ragnarok; no company, designer, or publishing date given in game); $2.95. 4-page 5½" x 8½" rulebook, two 8½" x 11" sheets of knight record charts, 8½" x 11" heavy paper playing sheet, six knight counters on colored paper, ziplock bag. One or more players.

FIELD OF HONOR purports to be a detailed, man-to-man simulation of that most famous of medieval knightly pursuits, the joust. Players distribute training and equipment points to attributes and accoutrements. They then charge one another, attempting as they pass to deliver forceful blows to selected points of the opponent's anatomy. Successful attacks reduce an opponent's endurance; when that reaches zero, the match is over. Provision is made for character skill advancement through experience and equipment acquisition through the "spoils of victory."

The basic premise of FIELD OF HONOR is excellent. Numerous combinations of skill factors, equipment, and tactics are allowed for in the combat system. An overhead view of the charging knights determines where attacks are made, while a hex diagram of the knights' upper body is used to determine where blows actually strike. The overall combat system is imaginative and seems well thought out.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of many other aspects of this game. The system used to buy equipment bears no resemblance to reality. For instance, a flail (an iron bar, a piece of chain, and a wooden handle) costs as much as a suit of plate armor. Numerous weapons may be purchased, but only one horse. If your horse is killed, do you continue on foot? That would be difficult, because there are no rules for foot movement . . . in fact, there are *no movement rules at all.* Kind of takes something away from this "simulation." Furthermore, the production and component quality (cheap) don't do much for this game. The ludicrous cover illustration shows as much knowledge of medieval history as the equipment costs do.

My recommendation: If you like to design games, do so. You might get paid for it. Don't pay a "professional" game designer for the privilege of finishing his work. It's a bad investment of your time and it encourages sloppy work.

–John Rankin

SUPPLEMENTS

SOLOQUEST (Chaosium); $7.95. Designed by Alan LaVergne. Three solo adventures for *RuneQuest.* 78-page booklet. One player; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

This supplement includes three solo adventures – "DreamQuest," "Phony Stones," and "Maguffin Hunt." These are intended for a single character, and consist of numbered paragraphs saying, for example: "This is the first junction inside the mouth of the cave. It is about 20m from the mouth itself, and the daylight can be seen easily from this point, down the entry way. Clockwise from the entrance is a passage with a very high, flat ceiling. The third passage is lower, about 2m high, and has a pointed ceiling. Do you wish to leave (120), take the passage with the high, flat ceiling (17), or the low pointed-ceiling tunnel (93)?" Unlike other solo adventures on the market, this one is not organized by page; paragraph 120 is not on page 120 or page 12 or anything of the sort. In general, these adventures are suitable for fighters of more than "previous experience" but less than Runemaster level. There are also opportunities provided to use non-combat skills.

"DreamQuest" is the first and best of the three. Your character has been summoned in a dream by his god to defeat four cult enemies. The enemies are drawn randomly from a pool of 20. Since it is all in a dream, your character does not really die if he fails. On the other hand, he does lose power. "DreamQuest" does have a number of holes – What if you Befuddle your opponent? What if he kills you at the same instant that you kill him? – but all in all, it is a decent hacking scenario. It also has the big benefit of being reusable.

"Phony Stones" is not reusable. It is supposed to be a mystery. Your character goes around a hamlet, trying to identify a criminal from among a number of suspects. Unfortunately, the clues given are vague and contradictory, and it is unlikely that anyone will solve the mystery except by luck. To compensate a bit, you find that a couple of the "innocent" characters are actually desperados with rewards on their heads (for different crimes!), so it is possible to bring in the wrong person and still get a reward. However, this does little to alleviate the frustration and futility of this scenario.

"Maguffin Hunt" is introduced as a search of a stolen maguffin. In fact, it amounts to a dungeon-crawling expedition. The majority of the encounters are incidental to the quest, which is literally impossible to complete. To make things worse, the paragraphs are mislabeled in a couple of places, and the correct paragraphs are not easy to identify. In sum, "Maguffin Hunt" is a forgettable scenario.

SOLOQUEST is not the best solo adventure booklet around, but if you play *RuneQuest* there is not much competition. I hope Chaosium takes more care with future adventures.

–Forrest Johnson

TRAITOR (FASA); $7.50. Designed by Bill Fawcett. Approved for *Thieves' World.* 8½" x 11" 60-page book. 6 players; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

FASA has released its first approved adventure for Chaosium's *Thieves' World.* Like the RPG, TRAITOR is set in Sanctuary, the city of Robert Asprin's *Thieve's World* anthologies. Five player-characters, Hawkmasks in the service of Jubal (Sanctuary's crime lord) are ambushed in the opening sequence, and an important document being brought to Jubal is stolen. Deciding that one of the Hawkmasks must be a traitor, Jubal charges the players to find who it is and return the document – or else. The players must track down clues to the identity of the traitor – one of their own – and at-

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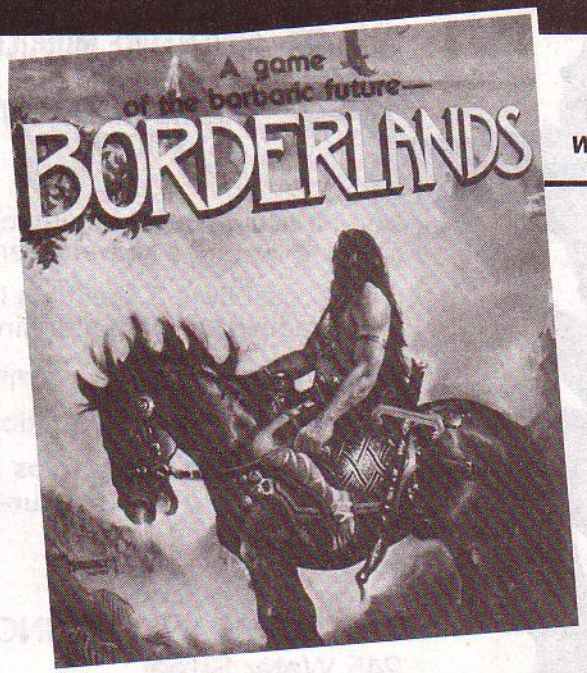

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tempt to recover the document. The player whose character is the traitor, if he wishes to save his life, must cover his trail while helping the others retrieve the document – even if it means seeing one of the others falsely accused. The adventure packet provides maps of buildings and structures in Sanctuary where the players might find answers (including a map of the city itself reprinted from the game), descriptions of nooks and crannies of the city and of its inhabitants who might play a part in the adventure, reproductions of documents that might hold clues, and detailed statistics and personality descriptions and backgrounds of the five player-characters. TRAITOR is so complete it can almost (though not quite) be run and enjoyed even by those who don't own *Thieves' World* – though knowledge of the anthologies would be a must in such a case.

Among the interesting innovations of TRAITOR is a method of delineating character stats and skills. Rather than try to render all the characters into the various RPG systems covered in TW, designer Fawcett has opted to rate skills by levels of from 0 to 9, explaining each level so that it could be easily translated into whatever RPG the GM is using. Six characteristics – might, intellect, knowledge, stamina, coordination, and appeal – are provided with percentile ratings for each. Again, it shouldn't be too difficult (especially with the aid of a calculator) to translate these to values used in a particular system and give the appropriate names to the characteristics – i.e., strength, dexterity, charisma, etc. Another interesting feature is the possibility, depending on how the character sheets are distributed, that any of the player-characters may be the traitor – which should keep even those players who have read the adventure guessing.

The only possible problem in TRAITOR derives from its main strength. Since the player-characters are fully described and pregenerated, the adventure requires a lot of role-playing! A player can't just roll up a character and play it any old way he chooses. While this is an approach too often lacking in most systems, it may prove difficult to those not used to it, resulting in a less-than-satisfying outcome. Some might note, too, a lot of duplication that wastes some space (character descriptions appearing three times, etc.), but due to the nature of the adventure, most of this seems unavoidable.

Overall, TRAITOR is an excellent offering that should provide plenty of excitement in Sanctuary. And even those TW enthusiasts who don't want to run or play the adventure itself should find the bonus essay by Robert Asprin himself on gaming Jubal plus the new background info on Sanctuary well worth shelling out the price of the book.

– William A. Barton

ZIENTECK (Judges Guild); $3.50. Designed by Mark Harmon. AD&D supplement. 8½" x 11" 32-page booklet. 7 or more players; playing time three evenings. Published 1982.

Why trudge into the ill-famed Black Angel Woods? Because beyond the woods, legend hath it, lie the remains of Wizard Zienteck's stronghold – where wizardly books and treasure survived the destruction of Griendal the Dragon. This booklet provides encounter tables for the Black Angel Woods and Dragon Mountains, two new monsters (black angels and fire chameleons), a wilderness map, a Dragon's Lair map, and the info on Zienteck dungeon (including an optional players' map).

There are a few bright spots – a monster custom-designed by old Zienteck himself, and murals in the dungeon that clue the adventurers in as to what originally went on there. A DM will have few problems running this adventure.

An adventure runs like this: trudge through Black Angel Woods (roll up random encounters), trudge through Dragon Mountains (roll up random encounters), visit Dragon's Lair if you wish (interesting, but probably uneventful, unless you care to take on Griendal), then wanser to Zienteck dungeon (nine monsters in 46 rooms, plus a generous scattering of traps and secret doors). Just a hack-and-slash adventure. All clues are worthless, the wilderness map is 80% unexplained (wait for future supplements), and the narrator's idea of wit makes my gorge rise. The only NPCs are the dragons themselves.

What a bore! An intrepid 12-year-old could do just as well, and perhaps better. Don't buy ZIENTECK.

– W.G. Armintrout

COMPUTER GAMES

THE PRISONER (Edu-Ware); $2.95. Designed by David Mullich. 48K disk for Applesoft. One player; playing time extensive. Can be saved. Published 1981.

THE PRISONER is a psychological assault upon the player in which the program attempts to browbeat and cower you into submission. The object is simply to avoid disclosing a three-number resignation code and escape from "The Island" which appears to be a collection of 20 or more interconnected environs through which you are free to roam. The difficulty is that there are no reference points and no rules. They have to be found during play and they may change.

The psychological attack is very real in THE PRISONER. The game will wear you down as

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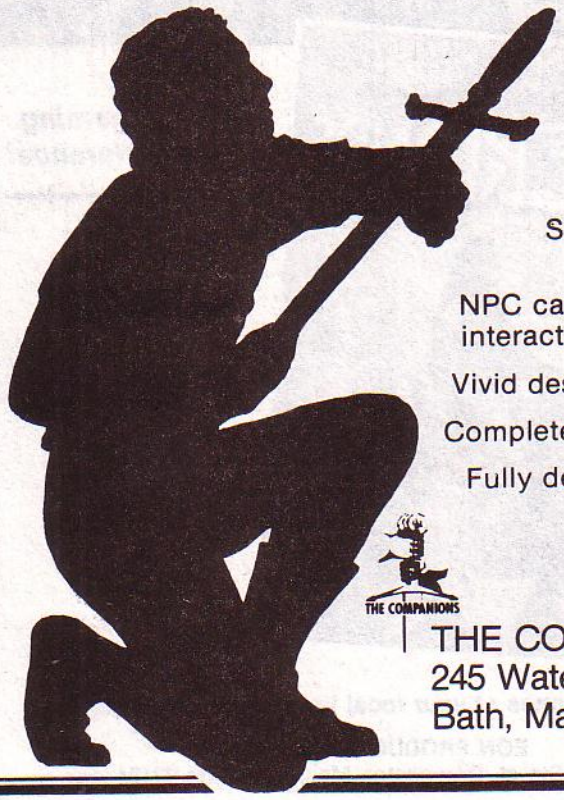

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play progresses unless you are extremely vigilant. This is, of course, precisely what "they" want. The puzzles are interesting but by no means as difficult as those which may be encountered in many other adventure games. The greatest problem may be simply to find out what the devil you are supposed to do. The graphics are nothing to get excited about, being primitive by current standards. They are mostly black and white character generated with an occasional low-res or hi-res color view and much use of subliminals. There are, however, many of them and they are used imaginatively to define the environment, and above all, to confuse the issue. The church scene in particular is a jarring experience. The accoustic accompaniment provides a certain amount of sparkle to many text outputs and fairly drives you batty at other times.

I had expected that the keyboard functions would exhibit far more variability and confusion. Too much information is given on the correct key choice at each location and even the one really cute ploy is spelled out in detail. A potentially more serious criticism is that a program in which most of the normal key functions are suspended and in which you have been invited to explore the keyboard to find the appropriate response should be bug-free. THE PRISONER is not without bugs. I am sure that there is a very good error trapping routine. You cannot crash the program and, whenever an error does occur (which is not often), then the game is automatically saved and no real harm is done.

These criticisms notwithstanding, THE PRISONER is a riot from go to woe and will have you cursing and laughing all the way through.

–A.D. Young

ARCADE GAMES

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (Parker Brothers); $31.99. Cartridge for the Atari. Cartridge and 8-page rulebook. One or two players; playing time usually less than five minutes. Released 1982.

The first cartridge from Parker Brothers is a recreation of the battle between the rebel soldiers and the Empire's All Terrain Armored Transport walkers. The rebels use small Snowspeeders: anti-grav low-altitude fighters armed with frontal lasers, with the maneuverability of a fast helicopter (VTOL, however, turn on a dime). These Snowspeeders are up against some very tough customers, in the form of Imperial Walkers. Thes elephant-like monsters move in a straight line from left to right. Their goal is the right end of your screen, where the power generators and rebel base lie.

The game borrows a lot from ***Defender***. Only one Walker is displayed on-screen at a time, with the rest on a ***Defender***esque radar screen. The battlefield is "wrap-around" – when you leave one end of the screen, you enter from the other. The Walkers, which are controlled by the computer, are destroyed by 48 shots from the Snowspeeder. This can take a while, especially when dodging all the laser fire from the Walker. The Walkers do have a vulnerable spot, though its position changes and disappears every few seconds. If you score a direct hit on a "bomb hatch," the Walker blows up and you get 100 points. If your Speeder lasts two minutes, the Force will find you, giving you invulnerability, a refrain from the "Star Wars" theme, and 20 seconds to give the Walkers everything you've got. Every 2000 points, a new Snowspeeder joins your fleet; every time a Walker is destroyed, another one attacks, thus

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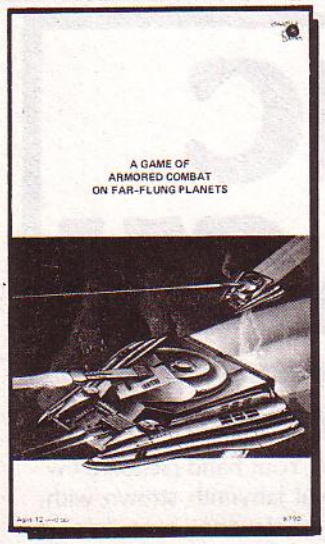

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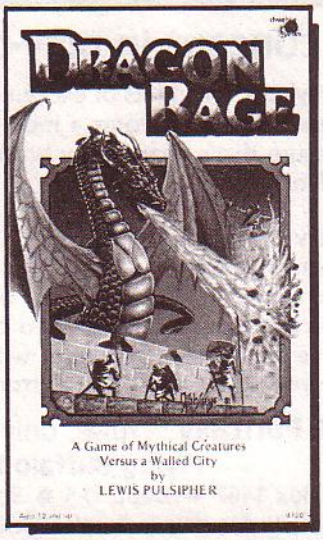

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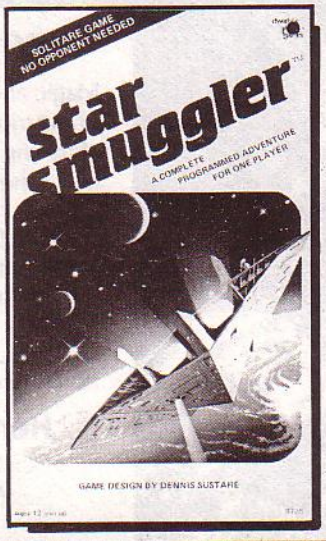

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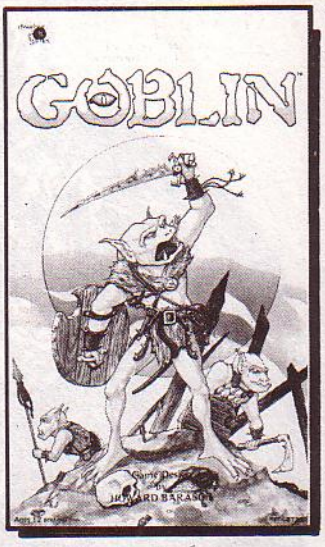

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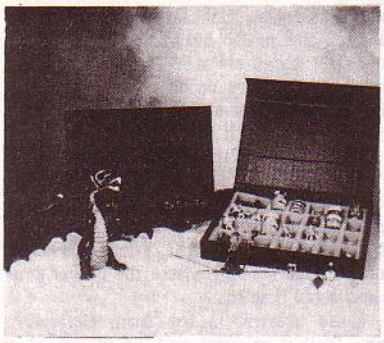

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giving you a very long and hard battle.

There are a lot of good points to the game. The packaging is nice, and the instruction booklet is colorful and concise. The graphics are good, and the Walkers move well. When you turn the game on, you get the first few bars of John Williams' "Star Wars" theme. When your Speeder is hit, you can drop into a valley for quick field repairs. There are 32 game variations equally divided between one- and two-player games. Some variations allow the Walker to fire smart bombs, which track the location of the player's craft. When the Walkers get near the end of your screen, a warning sound is given off; as they get still closer, the sky begins to flash, lightning-like. This is a good warning to tell the player that things could end *fast*.

Bad points? For one, there's no building or object to mark the rebel power generators. This makes you wonder just what you're defending (interesting, because a Parker Brothers ad showed the generators in a simulated-TV picture). Nothing is really detailed: the Walkers and Speeders are little more than silhouettes. Although the graphics are good, they are not up to the smoothly-animated quality of Activision or Imagic. The major portions of the movie's battle cannot be recreated, due to the memory limitations of the VCS. You can't tie up a Walker's legs. Only one Speeder is used at a time, unlike the squadron in the movie. When a Speeder crashes, you can't bail out and fire at a Walker with a hand laser or chuck a bomb into its belly.

However, I'd have to say that the good points outweigh the bad, and it *is* fun to play. I'd say that this is an excellent start for a company new to the VCS scene. May the Force be with you!

–Ed Driscoll

KABOOM! (Activision); $21.95. Designed by Larry Kaplan. Cartridge for the Atari. In-

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cludes one cartridge and a three-page instruction booklet. One or two players; playing time one to fifteen minutes. Published 1981.

In KABOOM! the player controls buckets of water which move horizontally along the bottom of the screen, while the computer controls the "Mad Bomber," who moves along the top of the screen. The bomber drops bombs (naturally) which fall until caught in a bucket or until they hit the ground and explode (costing the player a bucket). Sounds easy, right? Wrong!

There are eight groups of bombs to be dropped. Later groups are faster and contain more bombs. The first few levels border on being dull, but it takes real practice to be able to handle levels five on up. The flow of play is much different from shooting games. Catching things is a whole new process which takes a new skill.

While the game is challenging in that it is fast and furious, it can be disappointing since there is but one action to perform. And it's a game of reflexes, not thought.

All in all, it is hard to recommend KABOOM! Definitely try this one before buying.

–Richard A. Edwards

STARMASTER (Activision); $26.95. Designed by Alan Miller. Cartridge for the Atari. Includes one cartridge and two six-page instruction booklets. One player; playing time one to twenty minutes. Published 1982.

As pilot of a starship, the player must destroy all the enemy fighters in as short a time as is possible without allowing them to destroy his bases. The ship is armed with laser cannon and is provided with radar, warp engines, and shields. Through innovative use of the black & white/color television switch on the console, the player has two view screens. One provides a galactic chart of base locations and enemy positions (which move as they try to surround the bases) and the other is a tactical view for aiming and firing at enemy fighters. The best score can be gained by destroying all the enemy fighters as quickly as possible (this game is played in real time) while not losing bases or returning to them for aid or repairs.

There is only one word to describe this game with its stars streaking by and laser bolts sizzling: fantastic! The bottom of the screens are color-coded for information and there are informational readouts to keep track of time, damage, and energy. Sound reports and flashing screen colors show hits, special damage, and much more. The four levels of play allow any player to win the easy ones and be quickly destroyed in the advanced versions until practice finally allows a low point win. This game is a challenge is strategy and tactics/arcade.

The only small flaw noticed was that during warp travel, when the stars blur by and meteors swing close, threatening to hit the vessel, if the ship constantly turns to the screen-edge, meteors will almost never pose a problem. This is only a small edge in the game, but one apparently not design-intended and one which does not award good play but bypasses legitimate game obstacles.

STARMASTER is very similar to the Atari 400/800 game ***Star Raiders.*** Its graphics are perhaps not quite as good, but the sound and color keys are better, and best of all, it can be played on the Atari VCS. Pick this one up.

–Richard A. Edwards

MINIATURES

LASERBURN (Tabletop – distributed in U.S. by Ral Partha); $4.50, $8. Designed by Bryan Ansell. 15mm-scale miniatures. U.S. release 1982.

This 15mm science fiction line was originally designed for use with Tabletop's own ***Laserburn*** set of Tactical rules. The miniatures will, however, work equally well with any compatible SFRPG system. Figures come bubble-packed with six to 12 human types or one vehicle per set. The line currently comprises 26 sets, with more promised for near-future release.

The variety of figures and equipment is exceptional. While the now seemingly-obligatory "Imperial" and "Rebel" types are well-represented, there are also some rather unique items. Civilians, thugs, law officers with dogs, warlords, even assault trikes (stupid concept, but cute) give scope for some very interesting scenarios (***Car Wars*** anyone?). Some of these figures are outstanding. The imperial marines in dreadnought armor, for instance, are the finest rendition of Heinlein's "Starship Troopers" yet done.

The line, unfortunately, does have some serious flaws, particularly where the vehicles are concerned. The air assault landing craft is about the ugliest, crudest piece of vehicular sculpting I've ever seen. To make matters worse, the casting on the larger pieces is far below the quality one expects from Ral Partha. Several of the review samples, such as the hovercraft APC, were so marred by mold lines, extraneous metal, etc. as to be totally unacceptable and should have been tossed back in the lead pot. Even the elegant attack helicopter (far and away the best vehicular item) had some surface pitting which took the edge off this little bird's highly charismatic appearance.

I do recommend the LASERBURN line, but with this caveat – look before you buy. With Ral Partha's vast retail distribution, this should not be difficult. While the figures are generally of excellent quality, the vehicles deserve close examination before you plunk down eight bucks for one. (P.S.: The helicopter would probably be a best-seller even if it were molded of Pla-Doh.)

–John Rankin

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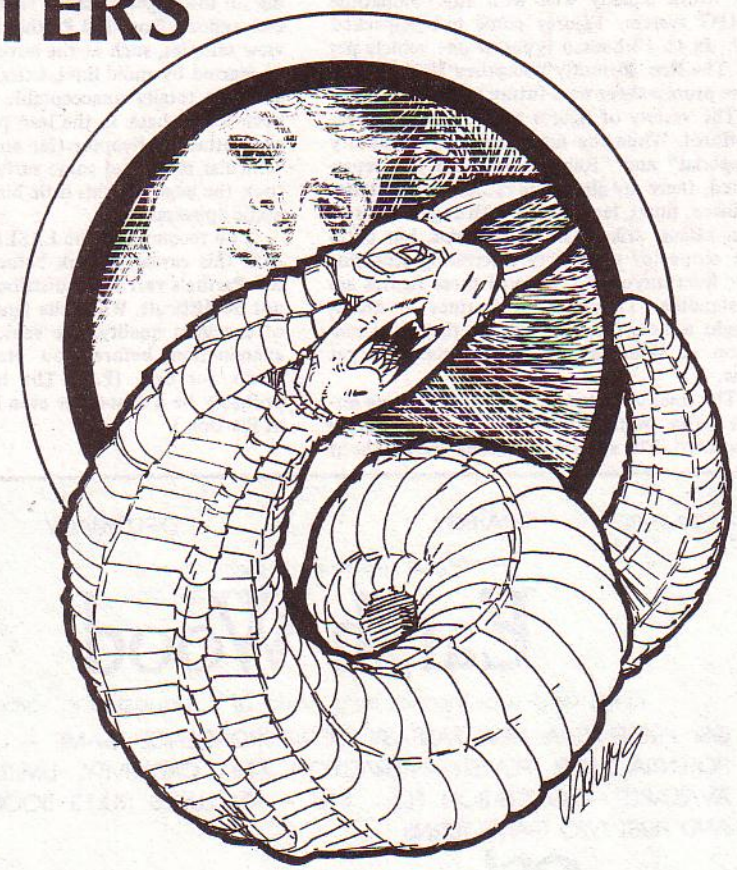

I just wanted to include this note to tell you I really enjoy TSG. Please note that the reason I buy it is mainly for the PBM Update. I hope you will continue it as I know of 20-30 people who read this column first every issue.

David Barry
Reston, VA

Sunday Drivers as a separate supplement? I've got to see *that!* AA, SJ, and playtesters must have worked like crazy to expand it; I wish I could claim more credit for what I started!

In case you haven't spotted it already: In the new Spielberg film E.T., the protagonist's older brother and friends are playing an anonymous role-playing/dungeon game! Apparently, the young star (reportedly a D&D player) convinced director Spielberg to include the game as an atmosphere-setter ("adventure-craving youngsters in suburbia play games until the real thing happens"). Interesting assimilation of the genre into the general culture!

Stefan Jones
Locust Valley, NY

So far, TSG is still sailing well under the new editor (not that I expected it not to).

The only problem is that dumb computer column. I suppose I should say that I have an MS in computer science, speak many computer languages, earn my pay working with four computers, etc., so I suppose I can't speak for your readership as a whole. I think only about one column has been worthwhile, though. The latest one was too detailed – it really was useless unless you have an HP-41. Why couldn't the author tell how it was done (the program commentary does *not* serve this purpose), so that any reader could adapt the program? While this month's column was an example of not seeing the forest for the trees, usually the Deus Ex Machina column is way too general, not even letting you know the forest contains trees. The usual topic seems to be "the computer can do x." No mention is made of the steps required to do this, just that it can. Wonderful – as far as I'm concerned, computers can do anything (it's not always easy getting them to do it, but they can).

All this criticism hasn't been very constructive, has it? Well, the column needs to have the right level of detail. What's that? I suppose it depends on your readers. I think a description of how the computer would be programmed to accomplish something would be best. That way, anyone can program for her own personal computer (since not everybody has an HP-41). If the reader isn't a programmer, he probably shouldn't be reading the column anyway; I don't see what he'd get out of it. On the other hand, I really don't need a description of how to roll nDm in order to figure out how to do it. I, for one, would not mind at all if you dropped Deus Ex Machina, since I have never gotten a new idea from it.

Most of your other articles are general enough that they could be adapted to other games (not counting things like ***Ogre*** variants); it's obvious that the Omni-Car can be used with any SFRPG, not just ***Traveller***. This is how it should be. I don't mind seeing an article on a particular boardgame, but role-playing articles should be general. After all, role-playing is wide open, while boardgames depend on their rules.

Name and Address withheld by TSG

The reason I withheld the name of the writer of the above letter is so that I could jump on my regular soapbox. Here we have a hobby wargamer with an MS in computer science who writes in a letter of commentary instead of a potential DEM article. Is anyone out there listening? **Send articles.**

–AA

Just received TSG 53 today.

First, let me compliment you on another well-done issue. I still feel that my subscription money is well-spent in subscribing to TSG; this way I do not miss a copy.

Particularly enjoyed "A Super Named John" by David Myers, especially the article immediately following it, outlining the stats for each of the four characters in three different game systems.

I particularly like this type of fiction, as it relates directly to my hobby, FRPGs. It allows me to more or less see an RPG in action. I just wish there were more writers out there that could produce this type of fiction for you. I would enjoy seeing such fiction about any and all FRPGs. Unfortunately, all gamers are not writers.

The new column, "Metal": more! more! more! No one else has approached this subject in this way. I hope this is, or will become, a popular column. It already is with me. (By the way, I have met Duke, and had a number of interesting conversations with him. A very knowledgeable person; it was a pleasure meeting him.)

Even though I do not have ***The Creature That Ate Sheboygan***, I did enjoy the article. It showed a considerable amount of thought and playtesting before the article was written.

"The Newcomers" by J. Andrew Keith, is pretty good. Not being a ***Traveller*** player, I really cannot judge, though.

The featured review of ***Striker*** by William A. Barton has convinced me to add this set of rules to my collection. Thank you!

"Scanner" is a great way to handle the information provided better than before – much better.

As always, "Murphy's Rules" brought a deep chuckle.

Thank you for another great issue.

Ben W. Lane
Fresno, CA

Re-subscribe??

Sorry, but I decided not.

Because I have been a TSG subscriber since issue 1, you may be interested in reasons and commentary.

Since Steve split with Meta, for whatever reasons, TSG seems to have become an increasingly shallow FRP vehicle. As TSR admits, the average FRPers age is around 16. (No, they don't differentiate physical and mental age, but look at the level their ads are directed to.) As Cosell might say, there are a "plethora" of FRP mags, and my FRP interest is minimal . . .

TSG *is* one of the better FRP mags, but – that says it. I guess you gotta go where the money is. I shall sample you occasionally; and when the FRP glop subsides, as it will, and you return to gaming, I will be with you again.

Gerry Thompson
Pacoima, CA

Sorry, Gerry, I'm not sure I can agree with most of the points your letter makes. We're pushing to publish all the good RPG (SF&F, not just fantasy) **and** *boardgaming material we can. Perhaps the average fantasy role-player's age* **is** *16; however, no one on our staff writes down to, up to, or for any specific age group, cultural background, or somatotype. If you are truly interested in magazines of the sort TSG used to be – house organs filled with tactics, designer's commentaries, and praise with no regard for the actual worth of the game – well, two such publications have premiered in the industry since last year. But we hope to see you again. Best wishes.*

–AA

StarMaster

Air screams around your ships as they enter the atmosphere. Missile-launchers fire deafeningly to port and starboard while atmosphere-fighters drop in shrieking dives from their hangers below. Warriors, tightly clenching their weapons, check their pressure suits one last time and climb in grim silence into their landing shuttles. In the distance five more heavy cruisers of your empire are firing and unloading their cargo, their hulls gleaming crimson in the light of the red sun above.

This is not a drill. Already laser and missile fire from the mile-wide guardian fortresses below have turned the sky into an exploding nightmare of smoke, fire, and fragmented metal. Planes and shuttles twist and dodge down towards a landscape rapidly becoming an inferno of flame and radiation.

This is no mere raid. For years your people had explored nearby systems without violence, trading technology to the primitive civilizations there in exchange for raw materials. Some species had even thought you gods.

Then you met the Aeratang. Merciless, brutal, they destroyed your exploring ships and began to slaughter your colonies. But you found their home planet and launched the greatest fleet your kind ever built to carry the war to your enemy. To fight for your very survival.

Will it be enough?

Starmaster is a correspondence game of galactic exploration, diplomacy, and conquest allowing for interaction not only between each player and the worlds of the galaxy, but between the players themselves.

New players begin further out from the Galactic Center than established players allowing them to develop themselves among equals. You may lead a powerful reptilian race, carving out a vast empire of colony and subject worlds; or perhaps an insectoid species, engaged in a holy crusade to convert the galaxy to the worship of their many-legged god.

As chosen ruler of your people, you must decide what diplomatic and military policies will be followed in order to lead your kind to dominance among the sentient beings of the galaxy.

The galaxies of StarMaster are a complete fantasy environment of solar systems, with geographies ranging from worlds near absolute zero to worlds where rivers of molten tungsten bubble, with technologies spanning from rock-throwing cave-dwellers to advanced Elder Races with near-godlike abilities.

Nor is the StarMaster environment limited in terms of playing area. There are multiple galaxies allowing for extra-galactic invasions across the voids. There are both natural and constructed gateways to (and from!) other dimensions and parallel universes.

StarMaster is limitless in possibilites, bounded only by imagination! It is a game where, literally, anything is possible.

StarMaster offers these features:

- Design your species as if you could have directed evolution to this moment.
- Design your homeworld in terms of temperature, atmosphere, and mass.
- Choose your government and social order.
- You decide the production for all worlds of your empire, building colonizing ships, merchantmen, warships, warriors, and fortresses.
- Technology increases steadily, permitting faster, larger ships, deadlier weapons, and scientific breakthroughs.

The galaxies are dotted with the ruins of Elder civilizations lacking the strength to master the stars. Can you lead your world to greatness where so many others fell short?

StarMaster may be entered for $12.00 which includes the first two turns, set up turn, a rule book and all necessary material (except return postage). Thereafter, turns are $3.50 each. A rule book may be purchased separately for $3.50.

Send to: **Schubel & Son**
P.O. Box 214848.
Sacramento, CA 95821

Enter me in StarMaster

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

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SCANNER: NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ADVENTURE GAMING

Paramount Sells *'Star Trek'* Rights, Cracks Down on Unauthorized Games

Paramount Pictures, owners of the rights to the *Star Trek* television series and movies, has sold PBM rights of the series to Entertainment Concepts, Inc. Paramount also seems to be taking a close look at other companies in the hobby gaming industry to curtain unauthorized use of *Star Trek*-based ships or art.

Entertainment Concepts, which has been running the PBM game ***Silverdawn,*** recently announced that it had acquired the rights to operate a ***Star Trek*** game. Each player in the game will captain a Federation heavy cruiser, and the *Enterprise* will be available as a player-ship.

However, at about the same time ECI was concluding its deal, rumors began circulating that Paramount was looking hard at companies making unauthorized use of *Star Trek* spacecraft designs.

Strategic Simulations, Inc., publishers of ***The Warp Factor,*** (a computer game whose ships bear a marked resemblance to *Star Trek* ships), actually did receive a letter from Paramount. "The only thing they were upset about was the artwork on the cover and the data cards," recalled Joel Billings of SSI. "Probably what'll happen is we'll end up changing the art."

Billings theorized that the Paramount crackdown would only involve computer games, as the film company plans to release a series of *Star Trek* arcade games. Others are not sure of that optimistic forecast, though. It has been noted that Task Force Games' ***Star Fleet Battles*** was created under a license from Franz Joseph Designs (of *Star Fleet Technical Manual* fame) and not Paramount itself, and industry observers wonder whether the studio will accept the game as a valid usage of the license. There has been no communication between Paramount and Task Force so far, though, so such rumors may be just idle speculation.

Citadel Withdraws Cerebus Miniatures

A recent controversy over the unauthorized production of Cerebus the Aardvark miniatures has been resolved. Citadel UK, the British company which originally produced the miniatures, has withdrawn the line from the market; Citadel US, the stateside associate company, will probably be withdrawing the line in the U.S.

Cerebus the Aardvark, a popular underground comic published in Canada, recounts the adventures of a stoically heroic barbarian aardvark and his occasional allies, most of whom are satiric swipes at well-known comic book and sword & sorcery characters. Recently, Citadel UK released a set of "Earthpig" figures for its ***Weird Fantasy*** line of miniatures, and buyers immediately noted a resemblence to the Cerebus character.

According to Deni Sim, publisher of Aardvark-Vanaheim, which produces Cerebus, Citadel promised to withdraw the Earthpig set. "Citadel replied that they had not been aware of it [the copyright violation] and they would take them off the market," recalled Mrs. Sim.

As of press time, however, Citadel US had not been notified of the withdrawal by Citadel UK. "We have a character, Angus the Aardvark," said Jack Hesselbrock of Citadel US; "I don't know anything about Cerebus, I've never heard of it. But if there is a problem, we'll pull the figures."

Could there be an authorized Citadel set of Cerebus miniatures? Mrs. Sim's opinion is that it probably won't happen. "We approached Citadel [UK] with the idea . . . and we were told that the figures had not sold that well. Personally, I don't believe that," she commented.

News Briefs

TSR Expands Work Force

TSR Hobbies, Inc., publisher of ***Dungeons & Dragons,*** recently announced that it was expanding its work force by 160 positions over the next six months. Qualified personnel should send resumes and salary requirements to the personnel department at TSR Hobbies.

Star Cluster One Moves

The Buchanan Company, moderators of ***Star Cluster One,*** have discontinued the game and returned distribution rights to Steve Jackson Games. Negotiations with Central Texas Computing are in progress; CTC has expressed willingness to honor all turns purchased from Buchanan, and the game may be restarted by the end of 1982.

Judges Guild Reduces Size

Judges Guild, publishers of licensed and unlicensed role-playing supplements, has cut back on staff size. Because of the company's financial overextension and large numbers of distributor returns, JG's Bob Bledsaw on July 9th laid off the entire creative staff. The following Monday he began rehiring, ending up with a full-time staff of about eight, compared to a 1981 staff total (full-time and part-time employees) of 67. Judges Guild still has a number of releases upcoming, including some boxed releases, and will continue publishing *Pegasus.*

Origins Winners Announced

At Origins '82, the eighth annual adventure gaming show, which was held in Baltimore, July 23-25, the following games, etc. won awards in their respective categories. A full list of all nominees was printed in TSG 53.

The H.G. Wells Awards for outstanding achievement in miniatures and role-playing games –

For Best Historical Figure Series 1981: Ral Partha's ***Condotierri.***

For Best Fantasy and/or Science Fiction Figure Series 1981: Martian Metals' ***Dragonslayers & Travellers.***

For Best Vehicular Model Series 1981: GHQ's ***Micro Armor.***

For Best Miniatures Rules 1981: ***Harpoon.***

For Best Role-Playing Rules 1981: ***Call of Cthulhu.***

For Best Role-Playing Adventure 1981: ***Thieves' World.***

For Best Professional Miniatures Magazine 1981: *Courier.*

For Best Professional Role-Playing Magazine 1981: *The Journal of the Travellers Aid Society.*

For All-Time Best Miniatures Rules for 20th Century Land Battles: ***Tacforce.***

For All-Time Best Miniatures Rules for Pre-20th Century Land Battles: ***Ship o' the Line.***

The Charles Roberts Awards for outstanding achievement in boardgaming –

For Best Pre-20th Century Boardgame 1981: ***A House Divided.***

For Best 20th Century Boardgame 1981: ***Wings.***

For Best Science Fiction Boardgame 1981: ***Car Wars.***

For Best Fantasy Boardgame 1981: ***Barbarian Prince.***

For Best Initial Boardgame Release 1981: ***Iron Bottom Sound.***

For Best Professional Boardgaming Magazine 1981: *Fire & Movement.*

For Best Adventure Game for Home Computer 1981: ***Eastern Front.***

For Best Amateur Adventure Gaming Magazine 1981: *Journal of WWII Wargaming.*

Marc Wm. Miller was added to the Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame.

Photo by Nick Schuessler

Origins 82 was attended by approximately 4,500 conventiongoers who participated in workshops, tournaments, general gaming, discussions, and just "walking the show," as attendees in the picture above are doing. A list of the winners of the 1981 Origins Awards appears at left.

Convention Calendar

*September 2-6: CHICON IV, aka WORLDCON. World SF convention. Contact @ P.O. Box A3120, Chicago, IL 60690.

September 4-6: GATEWAY 1982. Strategy game con and exposition. Contact Gateway PR Dept., P.O. Box 2577, Anaheim, CA 92804.

September 4-6: PACIFICON. Gaming convention. Contact @ P.O. Box 5548, San Jose, CA 95150.

September 18-19: MASSCON '82. Western Massachusetts games con. Write c/o Dennis Wang, 11 Dickson Street, Amherst, CA 01002, or call 413/253-9472 evenings.

September 24-26: BABEL CONFERENCE '82. SF&F, comics, wargaming. Contact c/o Dave Marshall, 1160 36th Street SW, Wyoming, MI 49509.

October 1-3: ARMADILLOCON 4. SF convention. Contact c/o Robert Taylor, P.O. Box 9612 NW Station, Austin, TX 78766.

October 2-3: MADCON IV. FRP, miniatures, wargames. Contact Mark Anderson c/o Pegasus Games, 222 West Gorham, Madison, WI 53703 with SASE.

October 2-3: TOL-CON '82. Gaming con. Contact Mind Games, 3001 North Reynolds Road, Toledo, OH 43615.

October 8-10: WIN GAMES III. To be held at University of Manitoba. Contact the University of Manitoba Wargames Club, Box 80, University Centre, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

October 29: STARCON '82. Strategy, tactics, RPGs. Contact Ignacy Lipiec, 229 East 22nd Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5V 1T8 Canada.

November 5-7: WARGAMERS WEEKEND. Contact Chris' Game and Hobby, 83 Lafayette Road, Salisbury, MA 01950, or call 617/462-8241.

November 12-14: MDG WINTER GAMEFEST. Boardgames, miniatures, RPGs Contact MDG, W-11 Info, Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192.

November 12-14: WESTERN RECON '82. SF &F, fantasy gaming. Contact Karl Miller, 837 North University Village, Salt Lake City, UT, 84108, 801-582-6076.

*July 14-17, 1983: ORIGINS '83. Adventure gaming con. Contact MDG, Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192.

SJ GAMES and TSG will be attending the conventions marked above with asterisks.

PBM Update

PBM Update reports on professionally-moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month, for the issue in which the notice is to appear. (Deadline for the December issue is October 1.) All copy should be typed and double-spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. TSG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.

THE TRIBES OF CRANE (Schubel & Son)

Crane I: The First Empire has defeated the remaining Lizard King/Dark Union forces in the Sinuous Sea area. The First Empire's campaign began with the capture of the Lizard King capital at Selwood. Surviving naval units retreated south to the Dark Union port city of Festil while land-based forces fled southeast through the Great Centoor Desert or east to the city of Ox. Both Ox and Festil were quickly surrounded, trapping the units within. After a month-long siege, Ox was captured. The Kinglord of Festil, dismayed by the series of First Empire victories, sued for peace. The only remaining enemy stronghold in the area is the city of Xenia, which has been ravaged by months of civil war.

Crane II: The Celtani Federation/Halton Factor Wars are continuing to heat up. The CF citadel at Ura has now come under siege, prompting many disheartened CF to defect from their long-time allies. It is rumored that some have chosen to betray the CF defenses rather than face Halton Factor forces. All is not lost, however, as word begins to spread of a series of CF victories in the south polar area over HF forces.

George V. Schubel

STAR VENTURE (Schubel & Son)

Piracy has begun to spread throughout the known galaxy. Over a dozen ships have been attacked and captured in recent weeks, primarily by renegade ground parties. One group of pirates was even so bold as to stage an attack on Imperia, the Imperial headquarters. Though successful in capturing the medium freighter *Mandalay*, they were unable to escape with their ill-gotten gains. Upon receiving word of this violation of Imperial Law (which prohibits combat in the Colossus system), Imperial forces, led by the Starkiller *Dread*, attacked and destroyed the pirate force. The *Mandalay*, once recaptured, was returned to its rightful owners. Imperial authorities have begun to advise star captains to avoid leaving their ships on the ground anywhere outside the Colossus system for any length of time.

George V. Schubel

UNIVERSE III (Central Texas Computing)

Quadrant V: The Etuel appear to be considering the construction of space stations to enable the Terrans to colonize the outlying areas of the universe. Several Terran captains have established mining colonies in uncivilized systems, and appear to be attempting to establish industrial bases.

Quadrant VI: The Alar-Muar war seems to be heating up, with the Alar apparently scoring several victories. The Terrans appear to be adopting a wait-and-see attitude toward this conflict.

Quadrant VII: Several captains have pieced together alien artifacts to form complete devices, and the sale of these to the Etuel seem to be slowing down. The Terrans have formed several strong alliances, and are attempting to obtain benefits from the Etuel by dealing as groups, rather than individually.

Quadrant VIII: Terran exploration continues, despite the threat of attack by the Alar. Rumor has it that one Terran captain has discovered how to jump the boundary layer. There are also strong rumors of several fledgling Terran alliances.

Company News: We are considering opening several new quadrants, if demand continues, and are also negotiating to acquire the rights to ***StarCluster*** from Steve Jackson.

David Bolduc

UNIVERSE II (Clemens & Associates)

Quadrant I: As the Regajian forces expand their empire, destroying ships and colonies, the Terran alliances seem to be withdrawing rather than fight. One exception was the heroic, but futile, defense of Angelique by the ICP.

Quadrant II: A Sing Nahrev has been set loose in the Algieba-Ras Elased corridor by a Terran ship. All ships are warned that it attacks automatically.

Quadrant III: The CSA have become a major power in their area and have now established themselves in most quadrants. Their final goal is not known.

Quadrant IV: The first starship to ever use an Etuel boundary crossing device was 4070K. Commander Karen is no longer in this quadrant. Will she, or can she, return?

Regajian Empire: Unity has finished destroying the peaceful colonies in our Quad IV Empire. Soon our Quad I armada will avenge these senseless deaths.

Ixtli Empire: Activity on our borders by the LOC Alliance has caused forces to be shifted away from the Regajian front.

Muar Empire: Both empires are in a period of rebuilding. Outposts have been reinforced and patrols guard the borders.

Jon Clemens

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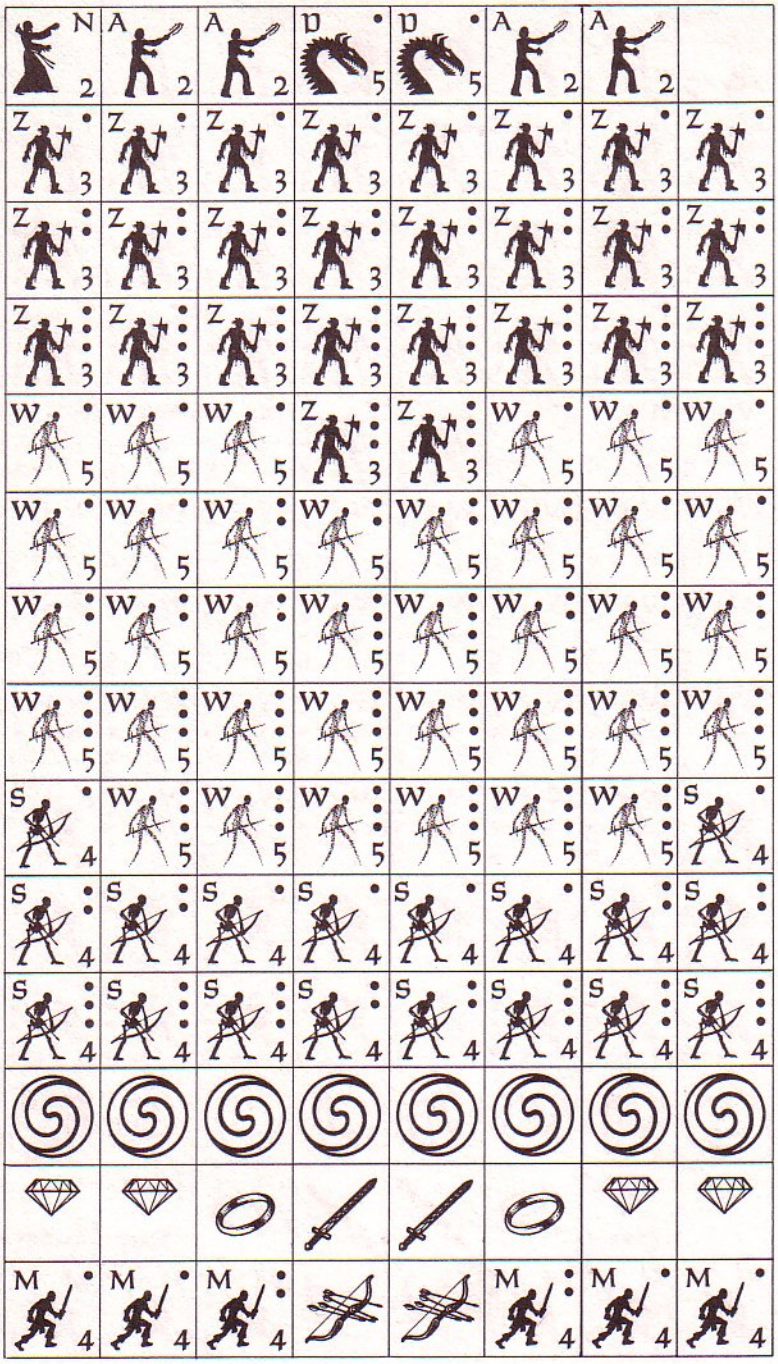

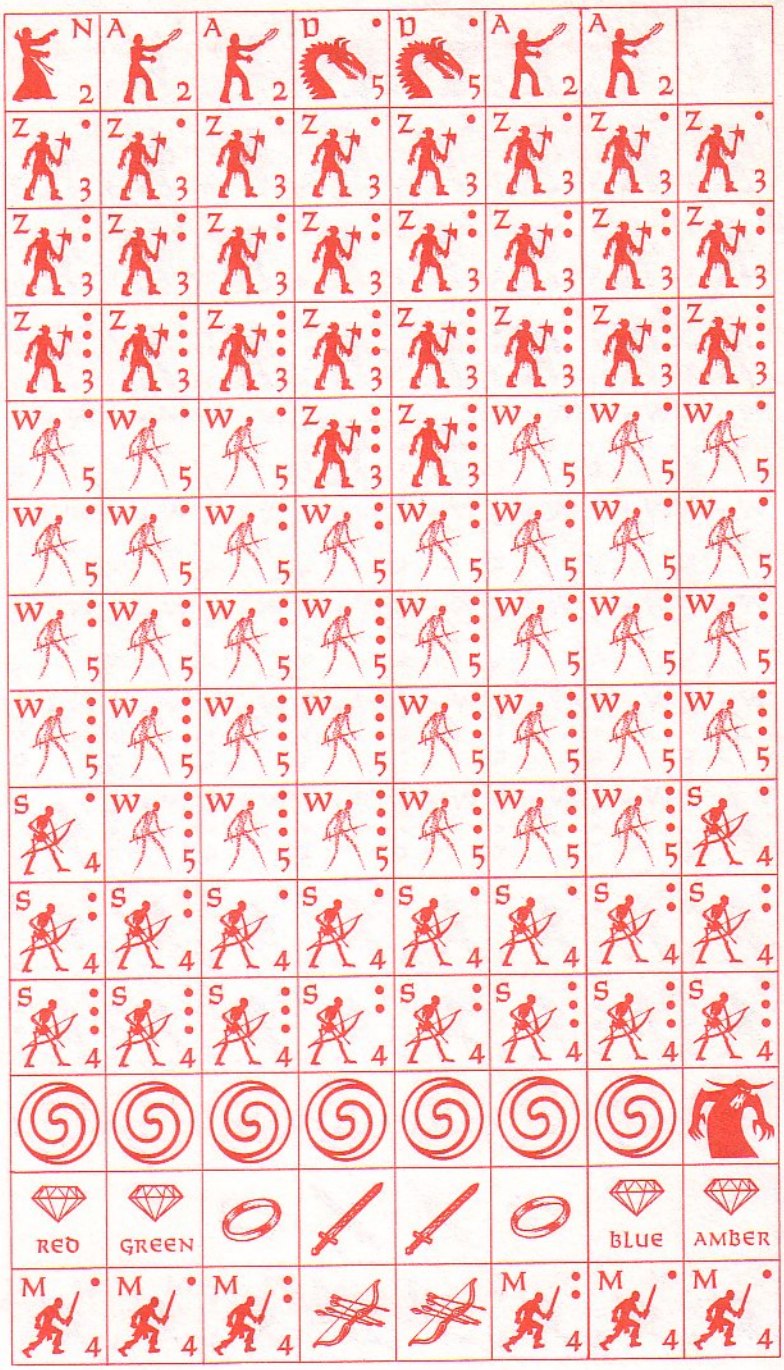
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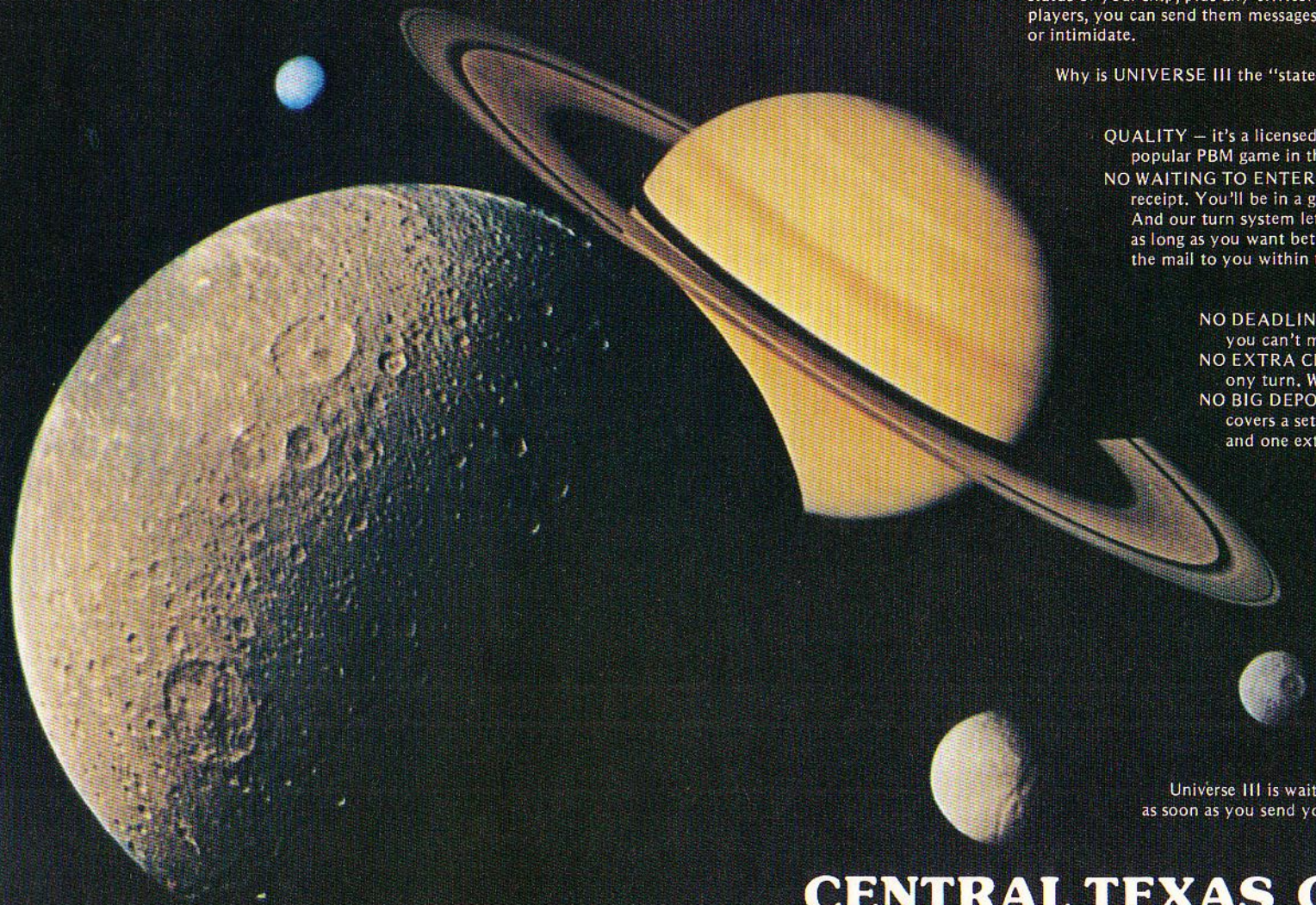
UNIVERSE III



A computer-moderated correspondence game in which each player commands a starship entering a new universe . . . to explore, colonize and conquer new worlds . . . contending with other players and unknown hazards! Each time you send in a turn, the computer evaluates it with respect to the current game situation and other players' moves, and sends you a printout showing the current status of your ship, plus any territory you control. When you "meet" other players, you can send them messages – to share information, trade, negotiate or intimidate.

Why is UNIVERSE III the "state-of-the-art" in play-by-mail games?

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NO WAITING TO ENTER OR PLAY – Entries are processed on receipt. You'll be in a game within two weeks or your money back. And our turn system lets you move every week if you like – or take as long as you want between turns. Your results will generally be in the mail to you within two days of the time we receive your orders!

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NO EXTRA CHARGES – Our fee is $3.00 per ship or colony turn. We don't tack on extra fees for combat.

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John Prados, award-winning designer of ***Third Reich***, examines Napoleonic warfare from a fresh new perspective. The game system places heavy emphasis upon strategic planning and period flavor: levies must be called up and resources carefully husbanded, leaders have tremendous local importance, each type of unit has its own special rule, and an asymmetrical combat system accurately portrays typical results of early 19th Century battle. Eleven campaigns and scenarios allow the players to examine all crucial military events during the reign of Napoleon I.

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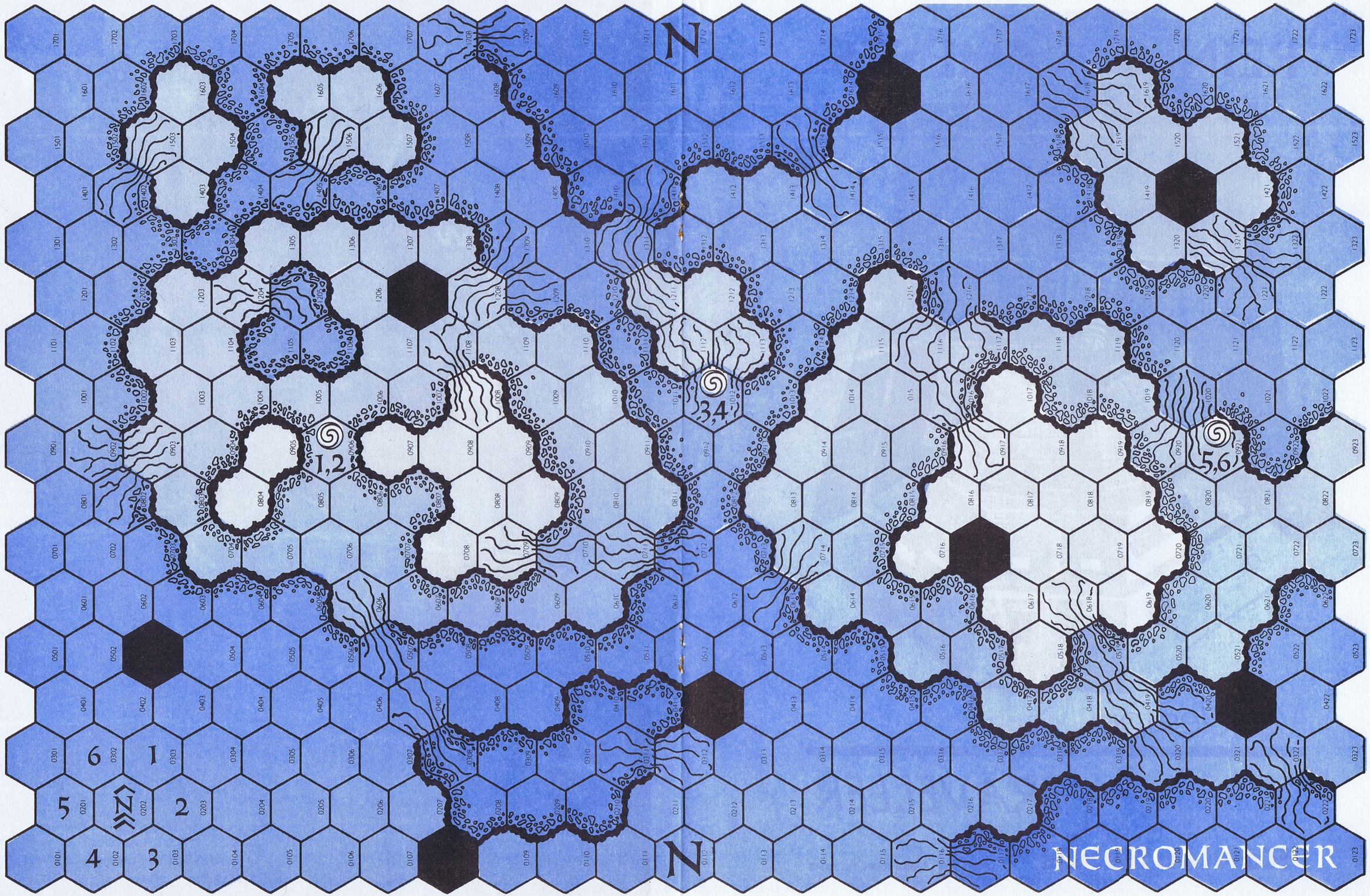
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